The Mystery of His Will

Marcus Rainsford B.A.

THE

MYSTERY OF HIS WILL.

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MYSTERY OF HIS WILL.

BY THE REV.

MARCUS RAINSFORD, B.A.,

AUTHOR OF

"No Condemnation: No Separation," "Straight Paths for your Feet," etc.

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PREFACE.

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to collect and set forth in simple form some of the precious gem truths contained in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. They supply matter more for faith, meditation, and prayer, than for exposition; and my object is to present them to my readers as subjects, the study of which has been already much blessed to my own soul, and to members of my congregation at Belgrave Chapel. A learner myself, I desire to sit with His people at the feet of Him who alone can unfold to us those heavenly mysteries "which from the beginning of the world have been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

MARCUS RAINSFORD.

BELGRAVE CHAPEL,
January, 1888.

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"THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL":

GEMS FROM EPHESIANS I.

THE revelation of the mystery of God's will concerning His people is the subject-matter of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. "His will," "the mystery of His will," and "the revelation of the mystery," "according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself." In chapter iii., *v.* 9, we are informed that this mystery was hid in God, "who created all things by Jesus Christ," and that His unsearchable riches are now proclaimed, to the intent that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known—by *The Church*—"the manifold wisdom of God," according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Himself, viz. (*v.* 6), "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ, by the Gospel." Note! Heirs together! Members together! Inheritors together, with each other, and with Christ! And all this "according to the good pleasure of His

will, to the praise of the glory of His grace," who, "having chosen us in Christ, hath blessed us in Him, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the *good pleasure of His will*" (*v.* 5). God wills many things; but there is one particular matter, called "the *good pleasure* of His will," that which most of all pleases Him—even the predestination of His people to the adoption of children to Himself, calling and taking out a people to be His very own, and exalting them into union with His Son over all His creatures, making them "accepted in the Beloved" (*v.* 6). "In whom we *have* redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; wherein He *hath* abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known to us the mystery of His will." And *who*, or what, are these chosen vessels of His grace? See! They are not described by any excellency in themselves, or love, or service! God Almighty never regards human excellency as His motive in dealing with His people: He only looks into His own heart. And, accordingly, the description given is, "That *we* should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ," or trusted beforehand. God seems to have a special honour reserved for those who trust in His rejected

Son. And next follows their destiny: "That we should be to the praise of His glory."

When our blessed Lord came down to this earth, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not," but "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Let us see to it that we put our names down among "as many as received Him." "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." The world rejected Him, but "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." Received *whom?* Received *what?* Marvellous that any should refuse to receive Him, for we have not to *purchase* Him, or *merit* Him, but simply to *receive* Him—the gift of God!

It is written: "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him: in them that hope in His mercy." So it was with the Ephesian believers. They had *heard the Word of truth*—the glad tidings of their salvation—in Christ: "in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." The *earnest* is a part of that which is to follow, and

is never withdrawn. Thus, the Holy Spirit is given as the earnest of their inheritance, to them that trust in Christ.

And the *purpose* of this grace, and the *end* God had in view, is (*v.* 10), "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He *might gather together in one all things in Christ.*" And yet again (iii. 10), "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by *The Church* the *manifold wisdom of God.*" See, what an immovable Rock the believer stands on: what security surrounds him! "*The eternal purpose*"—purposed in Christ—without reference to anything in us, except our need! Shall we not trust Him, and trust Him now? Perhaps the question may arise: "I wonder, am I a child of God or not?" Well, whether you are or whether you are not, come and trust Him now! That is the way to scatter doubts, and to puzzle and thwart Satan.

"Having made known unto us the *mystery* of His will" (*v.* 9). A mystery does not mean something difficult in itself, but that which cannot be known till it is revealed. We could not have dreamt what God's will was, if He had not revealed it to us, as it is written: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love

Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." He is the revealer of the mystery of God's will. Who could have dreamt that, after the sentence of death pronounced in Eden for man's sin, God had purposed, in His infinite love, to save His people, transferring their sentence to His dear Son, and giving eternal life to guilty sinners? This was beyond the power of angelic mind to conceive, even as it was beyond their power to effect. This, then, was the mystery hidden in God, and ordained before the world unto our glory, and "which none of the princes of this world knew." It was hidden from the wisdom of the great and wise ones of this world. The highest intellect on earth cannot grasp one spiritual fact. God the Holy Ghost must reveal God's truth: "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual." It was hidden from the Old Testament saints: "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of God which was in them did signify, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter i. 11). It was hidden from the angelic hosts, for it is written: "Which things the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter i. 12).

And what was this "mystery of His will"?

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him

should not perish but have everlasting life." Listen to the voice of the Son of God, as He reveals it (St. John vi. 40): "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Listen to the witness of the Spirit revealing it, in Heb. ix. 11, 12: "Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

God reveals the mystery of His will in Christ as an *accomplished* will: "Lo, I cyme to *do* Thy will, O God. . . . By the which will [the performed and accomplished will] we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. x. 9, 10). This is God's will and the revelation of the mystery: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God made manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

And now it is revealed "unto the sons of men . . . by the Spirit," that we Gentiles should be "fellow-

heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel" (Eph. iii. 5). A mystery "which had been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 26, 27). He in us, and we in Him; blessed in Him, "with *all* spiritual blessings" (*v.* 3); "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world" (*v.* 4); "predestinated in Him unto the adoption of children" (v. 5); "made accepted in the Beloved" (*v.* 6); "in whom we have redemption and forgiveness, according to the riches of His grace" (*v.* 7); "wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (*v.* 8); [He works *within* His people as well as *for* His people;] "in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (*v.* 11).

And why is all this revelation of love? Several reasons are given: "That *our faith and hope might be in God*" (1 Peter i. 21); for *our joy and peace*, that, believing, "we may rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"; for *our holiness and love*, "seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the

brethren, see that ye *love one another* with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter i. 22).

Moreover, we are "*renewed in His knowledge* after the image of Him that created us" (Col. iii. 10). And being renewed, we are in a position to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. xii. 2), "that we may be *filled with the knowledge of His will*" (Col. i. 9), that "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be *changed into the same image*" (2 Cor. iii. 18), that we may be "partakers of the Divine nature," (2 Peter i. 3); and, finally, "that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, when He shall gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. i. 10), we may become monuments by whom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known "the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. iii. 11).

"BLESSED WITH ALL BLESSINGS."

"Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."—*Eph.* i. 3.

IN fulfilling his commission to unfold the mystery of God's will, the apostle begins at the beginning. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *hath* blessed us with *all spiritual blessings* in heavenly places in Christ."

We might wish that sentence were written across the sky, that all men might read it, and by God's grace believe it. The Holy Spirit is not revealing a purpose *to be* fulfilled, but a fact already accomplished. He "*hath* blessed us." What a wonderful revelation of the mystery of God's will, according to His eternal purpose which He purposed in Himself! Who believes it? Do you? And, if not, what are you doing with the Word of God?

Who is this of whom the Spirit speaks? "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," who hath all blessing in Himself.

And *what* is the revelation? That "He hath

blessed us with all spiritual blessings." *Whom?* Those of whom He speaks in the 12th verse. God hath blessed in Christ *those who* trust in Him. To trust Him is to take Him at His word; to believe in what He has done; and to rest your soul on Him, who is made of God "unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." For all who have put their trust in Him "shall be to the praise of His glory."

"He hath blessed" them. How much? "With *all* spiritual blessings." *Where?* "In *heavenly places*," where no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth, and far above all the changes and chances of this life.

And *in whom* is this store laid up? "*In Christ Jesus.*" "Your life is hid with Christ in God." *All* spiritual blessings are given to every believer. Trust in Christ, and *all is yours*, as securely as Christ is on the throne of God. "All things are yours."

And *what* has He done? "*Blessed us.*" God has no fuller expression for grace than this, in either the Old or New Testament. He "blesses." It is an expression for the abundant fulness of His heart. He *blessed* Adam, and said: "Be fruitful and multiply." He *blessed* Abraham, saying: "In blessing I will bless thee." He commanded Aaron, as high priest, to *bless* the people: "Jehovah bless thee

and keep thee." And so, when Aaron's great Antitype came, the Lord Jesus Christ has no fuller term for His grace than this. He does not add to it: He can but repeat it. We have a remarkable instance of this in Matt. v. Nine times He repeated it, in each case adding a new phase of blessedness, thus opening out the fulness of the word :—

"Blessed . . . for yours is the kingdom of heaven."
"Blessed . . . for you shall be comforted."
"Blessed . . . for you shall inherit the earth."
"Blessed . . . for you shall be filled."
"Blessed . . . for you shall obtain mercy."
"Blessed . . . for you shall see God."
"Blessed . . . for you shall be called the children of God."

And so, after His resurrection, "He lifted up His hands and *blessed* them." And now that He is ascended to the right hand of God, He is represented in the passage before us as the centre and circumference of all the "spiritual *blessings*" God Himself can bestow. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath *blessed* us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And when He shall return, in glory, to gather His own to Himself, He returns to bless them. And when He shall gather all nations before Him, having put down all rule and authority and power, He shall say to the sheep on His right hand: "Come, ye *blessed* of My Father." For God,

having taken us to Himself, in Christ, to be our own God and Father, "God, even our own God," shall give us His *blessing*. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your *Father* in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" "Fear not, little flock, for it is your *Father's* good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

The Father's "good pleasure to give you the kingdom" is the mystery of His will revealed; and all this in Jesus Christ our *Lord*. "Lord" here means "Husband." It is the position we have in Rom. vii. 4: "My brethren, ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." We cannot bring forth fruit unto God until we are united to Christ—"married to *another*, that we might bring forth fruit unto God." The moment we trust Christ, the marriage of the soul is consummated, and we become evermore united to our risen Husband, "that we may bring forth fruit unto God."

We are blessed with "all spiritual blessings" in Him. We stand on a new foundation—enjoy a new creation. We fell in Adam, but we rise in Christ; we died in Adam, but we live in Christ; we sinned in Adam—we become the righteousness

of God in Christ! In His Cross we have paid our full atonement, and presented unto God the absolutely accepted, and acceptable Propitiation for all our sins. In His resurrection we have been "begotten again to a living hope." In His ascension He has not gone up to heaven alone, but we have been "raised up together with Him." Our enthroned Husband never ceases to be identified with His Bride. He came down into her nature to associate Himself with her ruin; and He has ascended into heaven to associate her with His glory.

His believing people are filled full in Him. We inherit "all spiritual blessings." "Unsearchable riches"—to pay all our debts, to "supply all our need," and to be our fulness. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Doth not the Holy Spirit seem to provoke to emulation any who are yet outside Christ, inviting all to come and feast and drink, and be satisfied in body and soul, and for time and eternity?

In Old Testament times, God called Himself "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." Now, He calls Himself the "*God and Father of* OUR *Lord Jesus Christ*," and in Christ all His people are blessed "with all spiritual blessings." "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Believers have a splendid portion! Why are we not always in the joyous, conscious possession of it? We have nothing to blame but our own *unbelief* and *inconsistency.* Oh, how much we lose! If God commands, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," surely it is our duty to obey; and it is in obedience to His Gospel all practical love, joy, faithfulness, and fruitfulness have their root. We have "all spiritual blessings" from the Father, in Christ, and by the Holy Ghost. The circle is complete in the fulness of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

We have a heavenly birth—"born of God"; a heavenly portion—"all spiritual blessings"; a heavenly title—"in Christ Jesus our Lord"; a heavenly qualification for the enjoyment of our inheritance—"the indwelling Holy Spirit"; a heavenly image stamped upon us—"His own image"; a heavenly relationship—"God our Father"; and heavenly promises, which are all "Yea and Amen" to us "in Christ Jesus."

And *where* are all these things deposited? *Where Christ is.* How safe they are!

Where is our treasure? In heaven.

Where is our country? In heaven.

Where is our citizenship? In heaven.

Where is our High Priest? In heaven.

Where are all our spiritual blessings? In heaven.

Oh, it is kind of God not to leave them down here in the wilderness, where we might be robbed of them or neglect or lose them! They are not in our hands, but in the hands of Christ—*so safe!* "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." This is our security. What an attraction Christ should be! Our hopes, thoughts, conversation, ends, aims—all—in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Let us have more faith, hope, and love; and be assured in God that He "*hath* blessed us." Not that He may do so some day to come; but that He has already blessed us in Christ—"before the world was." Do let us trust Him, and cast our poor souls on His bosom. Let us believe Him, prove Him, expect from Him, hope in His name, and wait for His coming; for "our life is hid with Christ in God."

"CHOSEN IN HIM."

"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."—*Eph.* i. 4.

THIS verse and the following are just the opening out of what God means when He says, "God hath *blessed* us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as He *hath* chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world."

Mark the tense—it is *done*. Note the blessings:

1. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children" (*v.* 5).

2. Having made us "accepted in the Beloved" (*v.* 6). This is the ground and warrant on which the man who believes can say, I *have* eternal life. This is the revelation of God's will, which He here makes known unto us.

3. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (*v.* 7). All forgiven! If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we are forgiven and justified from all things, and

there is nothing recorded against us in God's Book.

4. "Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (*v.* 8).

5. "That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ" (*v.* 12).

6. "In whom also we have obtained an *inheritance*" (*v.* 11).

7. "In whom after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with that holy Spirit of promise" (*v.* 13).

All these blessings are for those who trust in Christ. They are all associated with God's having "chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." All the blessings that we shall ever have from God come to us simply on the ground of His having "chosen us in Christ." All blessings are laid up in Christ, and come to us from Himself. The moment I trust Him, He is mine, and I am His for ever. "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." Himself the *first* chosen, and we in Him. Before God Almighty chose any creature, He chose Christ. He never would have created the world but that He chose Christ to be its King. He never would have created the Church but that He chose Christ to be her Husband. All things were created *in* Him, and *by* Him, and *for* Him; therefore we read in Isa. xlii. 1, "Behold

My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him;" and thence the anointing comes down from our glorious Head to sanctify, to satisfy, to quicken, and to fill, His members.

Christ was the first Predestinated One, and our security as predestinated ones is because we are "chosen in Him," "who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times *for you*, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Pet. i. 20).

We who first *trusted in Christ!* And what is trusting? It just means—*believing* what God has said; *hoping* in Him according to what He has said, and continuing to do so; *relying* upon Him that He will fulfil His promises in His own time and way, and according to our circumstances, and do whatever He sees right and best for us, notwithstanding all the difficulties *in* us, and around and against us. This is to trust Him. He hath blessed us. Others can only wish and pray for blessings for us—God alone can bestow them. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *hath* blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (*v.* 3). Oh, how won-

derful! Just take Him at His word. There is nothing said about the degrees of trust. It is "*whosoever* believeth;" "him that cometh." It is so very gracious of God to come down to us in this way.

We read of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, but His people are the centre. Have we ever tried to contemplate it?

Height: I "in Christ, that is the height."

Depth: "Christ in me, that is the depth."

Length: "From everlasting to everlasting," that is the length.

Breadth: "Ho! every one that thirsteth," that is the breadth.

This is the love of God, and "it passeth knowledge." Let us endeavour to contemplate these blessings in their order.

The first, "Chosen in Him." "According as He hath chosen us in Him." Thank God, the choice was made before we had any faith, or hope, or love, or good works, or repentance, or even separate existence. All these things followed upon our acceptance with and in Christ, and our appointed fellowship with Him. "Chosen to be holy and without blame before *Him* in love." Not for our merits, or even, in the first instance, for Christ's

merits,—but "in love." "Before Him." "Behold what manner of love!" Not for our merits, or even for Christ's sake, but "*in love*, having predestinated us;" for "God *so* loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son." We owe Christ Himself to this love of God. And if so, then all wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption—everything we get from Christ we owe to the love of God who gave Him.

"Chosen to be holy and without blame before Him in love." This is a description of heaven. I have no idea of heaven beyond this,—to be holy and without blame before God, and dwelling in His love. To have the enjoyment of loving Him and being loved; resting in His love, and loving Him back again,—*this* is heaven.

"Chosen in Him." We have a beautiful illustration of this choice in the Garden of Eden. Adam was made in the image of Christ. And where was Eve? She had not a separate existence, but was formed out of Adam. Adam was not created apart from Eve. What a picture of Christ and His Church! "Chosen in Him." *Christ first*, and we in Him, as Eve in Adam. God's people ever had an existence, before God, in union with Christ; and now they have no existence, in the sight of God, apart from Christ. Nor hath Christ

an existence, in the sight of God, apart from His people.

It is very necessary to distinguish between what God has done for us *in Christ*, and what He has done for us *through Christ.*

Through Christ He has given us life, holiness, adoption. He has justified us from all things, granted us the pardon of all our sins, given us the Holy Ghost, and promised us all grace and glory.

But *in* Christ He has called us into union *with Himself*,—"I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in one," "according as He hath chosen us *in Christ.*"

See 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23: "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; and ye are Christ's." Why? Because "Christ is God's," "chosen in Him." God's love is from everlasting. He has preferred us to all worlds. All things must work together for our good. Nothing can ever separate us from the love that "promised to us eternal life before the world began" (Titus i. 2). We have been "chosen in Him."

See, again, 1 Cor. i. 30: "Of Him"—that is, of God—"ye *are*,"—*i. e.*, have existence in Christ,—"who of God is made unto *us* wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Who? "*Us*" (*v.* 27). God hath chosen "the *foolish* things, the *weak* things, the *base* things, the things that are *despised*, and the things that *are not*," and of Him "ye *are*." Your existence is in Christ.

See the strong foundation on which faith may rest, and the exalted heights to which hope may soar, to comprehend with all saints the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

Some have wondered whether, in Christ, we really possess God. Now suppose, for argument sake, that Christ was not God. Does not God warn His people over and over again against idolatry, which means worshipping something that is not God? Now, the one grand theme of the Bible is the fulness, love, beauty, and salvation that are in Christ. "And when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. i. 6). Why, if Christ be not God, God has taught us idolatry. He who made us *died* for us, and He who died for us lives for us evermore, and loves us with an everlasting love, and has sent His Holy Spirit to reveal to us that Christ in whom we were "chosen before the foundation of the world." Other creations or creatures may stand or fall, but we stand *in Christ*, who is already far above all principality and power and in whom all fulness dwells.

"Chosen in Him,"—Christ the Firstborn, that we may be brethren.

Christ the Pattern, to whose image we shall one day be conformed.

Christ the Head of the body; His believing people the members. And from that Head comes down all the fulness that the Holy Spirit is capable of imparting to the members.

Christ the second Adam; we His bride—His second self.

Thanks be to God, we have an eternity before us for communion with Him, for we cannot fully reach it now.

Oh! think much of Christ's love and fulness for us, and let us write down our names among those who trust in Him, for it is written, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." Ye heard; ye believed; and, believing, ye trusted; and, in trusting, "ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

The Holy Ghost is God, and the earnest is *part* of the possession, sealed with God, purchased by God, to inherit God throughout eternity.

Meanwhile, let us learn—

1. To prize our Lord and Husband, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as all in all of us.

2. To see clearly the evidence of His Godhead; he is else a rival to God.

3. To rejoice in the Father's unspeakable love who gave us Christ and all in Christ.

4. To admire our Saviour's glory. All fulness dwells in Him.

5. To give glory to God, who passed by angels to unite Himself to us.

6. Never to regard ourselves as apart from Christ.

7. To regard as of little account what we may have or not have of honours, riches, parts, or talents, but only what we have and are in Christ before worlds were, and shall be in Him when time shall be no more.

Lastly, thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift, and for His love, that passeth knowledge.

Let us hear, believe trust, and be sealed.

THE CHILDREN.

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."—*Eph.* i. 5.

WE are studying the revelation of "the mystery of His will" concerning His people. The grace of God; "the riches of His grace" (*v.* 7); "the praise of the glory of His grace" (*v.* 6); "His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" (*v.* 9); and "the praise of His glory" (*v.* 14), *all* are brought to light and abundantly displayed in the fulness of the blessing with which He has blessed us in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, "in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

It is easy to utter these things. May God the Holy Ghost write them on our understandings, and cause them to sink down and become fountains of joy in our hearts!

We have had one revealed result of "the good

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pleasure of His will": He hath "blessed us with all spiritual blessings." This gospel is revealed for the joy of our faith, for every true believer possesses "*all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Let us claim our inheritance, secured to us in the "heavenly places"—beyond the reach of circumstances, dangers, perplexity, difficulty—"*in Christ Jesus*," to the glory of the grace of God.

Remember the distinction between what God had done for us *in Christ* and what He has done for us *through Christ*. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings and chosen us *in Christ*, and having done this we have an eternity of blessing as the result. But *through* Christ we have redemption and justification; through Christ we have for our portion all the fulness of God laid up in Him, for the refreshment, supply, security, and blessing of all the members of His mystical body.

His people are "*chosen in Him*," and now follows: "*predestinated* unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." A man in Christ has all blessings in storè for time and eternity—all needed grace here and all possible glory hereafter; and, that we may have close communion with God, He gathers us to Himself in Christ, predestinating us unto the adoption of children.

We read in Rom. viii. 29: "Whom He did fore-

know, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Is there anything beyond this? We read of Christ being "the brightness of the Father's glory," and "the express image of His Person"; but we are to be "conformed" to His image! We read of Him as "the *Firstborn*," and we are to be "conformed" to His image! "The firstborn among many brethren."

This election of grace has reference to our *persons* as members of Christ; but predestination has reference to the position and privileges God intends for us in union with His dear Son. And as foreknowing us, He predestinated us. He found no merit in us; He took us out of nature's guilt and darkness; He put us into Christ.

He foreknew all our circumstances and necessities; He knew the dangers and difficulties we would have to grapple with, and, in "predestinating us unto the adoption of children," He provided for all these things. He foreknew the *weakness* that He has been graciously pleased to teach us to confess; the *emptiness* and *temptations* which He knew would assail us, and the oppositions we would meet with in life's wilderness journey; and He therefore came down to us in the gracious foreviews of all our difficulties and need, and gave and provided all things for us in Christ.

"Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb." These are the things He foreknew. "For My name's sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? and I will not give My glory unto another. Hearken unto Me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He; I am the first, I also am the last" (Isa. xlviii. 8–12). And thus He seems to say: "Come, oh! come, then, poor sinner, conscious of your weakness, deficiencies, and corruptions. I have provided supplies in Christ for all your needs—for all that you have discovered in yourself, and all that I have discovered in you."

See a beautiful passage in Jer. iii., where God Almighty is holding counsel with Himself concerning guilty, corrupt, abominable, ungrateful sinners. In verse 19 He seems to commune with Himself as to the difficulties that are in His mind, and the unconquerable love that overcomes every difficulty. He purposes to put guilty sinners among

His children: nothing else can save them or satisfy Him. He thinks of His rejected messengers and neglected mercies, and how they rebelled and vexed His Spirit, and turned away from Him.

"How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage?" This was the purpose of His will; and the question was, How it could be done in keeping with justice, truth, and holiness; His hatred of sin and His judgments against sin? How shall I do it? "And I said, Thou shalt call Me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from Me." Thus God takes poor sinners into His family, adopts them amongst His children, putting His Holy Spirit within them, that they may not turn away from Him.

It is very interesting and instructive to observe carefully *who* He is addressing, what sort of people are the subjects of this grace: "They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to Me, saith the Lord" (Jer. iii. 1). A wanton adulteress is invited to return to her husband! The very land is polluted with her whoredoms and wickedness (*vv.* 2, 3): "Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien

with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed." But the chastisement sent was slighted. Then follows a parenthesis, while the Lord seems to pause, anticipating what He is going to do, and the surprise His love will produce; for He delights in His love.

He seems to say to Himself, "What will they say by-and-by, when I call them into My own family, having washed them in My blood?" "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, *My Father*, Thou art the guide of my youth?" "Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest" (*v.* 5). Again, "Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto Me. But she returned not" (*vv.* 6, 7), *despising My warnings!* And yet, nevertheless, "Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the

Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever" (*v.* 12). "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings" (*v.* 22). But how can it be done? "Thou shalt call Me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from Me" (*v.* 19). See, *adoption, regeneration, redemption!*—omnipotent love and grace have conquered! "Behold, we come unto Thee; for Thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel" (*vv.* 22, 23).

Thus Jehovah saves, by taking us out of self and putting us into Christ; by bestowal of the fulness of Christ, and adopting us into His family. "Predestinating us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

"Adoption" is taking a child that does not belong to your family, and has no claim on you, and by a legal act making it your own, delivering it from all responsibility as regards its own family, and introducing it into every privilege of the family into which it is adopted. This is what God does. He takes to Himself the helpless, poor, and miserable: those who were "dead in trespasses and sins . . . Gentiles in the flesh . . . strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the

world"; and He puts them among the children, and they call Him, "*My Father.*" "Predestinated unto the adoption of children." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

Christ stood in our place that we might stand in His. He gave Himself for us! He has taken us out of the family of the children of wrath, and introduced us into the family of God. "And if children then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

Now, if we are His children, let us not be surprised if our Father's discipline is training us for home. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." We are called into the fellowship of His sufferings. We are in an enemy's country, an ungenial clime; tempted, and with a cross to carry. "No cross, no crown." Let us not be surprised if we find ourselves buffeted here; the devil becomes our bitterest enemy the moment the Lord gives us the spirit of adoption.

We are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." When Christ was here, He was a stranger and a pilgrim. "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." He was often cast down; and we are not to think it strange "concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, as

though some strange thing happened to us; but to rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings."

When Christ was here His conversation was in heaven. His kingdom was not of this world; the world was crucified unto Him, and He unto the world. And if we are children of God, it will be just the same with us, who are predestinated to be conformed to His image. "In that He died, He died unto sin once; and in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." And so we in Him have died unto sin, and we in Him are living unto God; and "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

Let us, "therefore, mortify our members upon the earth." Let us come and claim this Divine relationship. Claim Christ, and God will not refuse the claim. Though we have backslidden, and been far off, yet the Lord says: "Return unto Me," "only confess your iniquities." If there is provision made in Christ for all our need, let us personally accept Him for all our salvation. His love is full and unchangeable; we are invited to come and dwell in that love. Believe in it, walk in it, and rest in it. Let us never regard ourselves as apart from Christ, nor reckon of what we have or may have of honour riches, influence; but of what we are in Him.

"ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED."

"Wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."—*Eph.* i. 6.

THIS is the sum, the climax, and the crown of all those spiritual blessings already spoken of as having been bestowed from all eternity on us who first trusted in Christ; that is to say, our trust in Him in time is the manifestation of God's purpose towards us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

This was the constant teaching of our Lord when on earth. See John xvii. 6: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word." And then in 1 Thess. i. 4: "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." And so when we preach Christ, and tell of His love, some believe and others believe not. But those

who receive Christ, manifest in so doing that they have been beloved in Christ from everlasting.

"*Chosen in Him*" to be holy, and predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the riches of His grace.

Perhaps there is no doctrine of the Scriptures more opposed in our day than this doctrine of election; but when intelligently received into the heart, there is no doctrine that gives such peace "Chosen in Him." "Having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself."

"Wherein He hath made us *accepted in the Beloved*,"—"*hath* made us," not intends to do it, but declares it done as an accomplished fact. "He hath made us accepted in the Beloved,"—all who put their trust in Christ. This is God's gospel.

There is implied here a twofold ground of acceptance :—

1. On account of our relation to His person.
2. On account of His atonement for our sins.

This word "accepted" only occurs twice in the New Testament. The Spirit of God applies it here to believers in Christ. The same expression is applied to the Virgin Mary, when He proclaims her "*highly favoured*" (Luke i. 28). He hath made us His *Hephzibahs*—made us *dear* to Him in the

Beloved—made us His *delights*, a *joy* to Himself in the BELOVED. Not "the Righteous One," though that is true. Not "the *Holy* One," though that is true; nor through His *blood* and *merits*, although He has so done. But there is a deeper truth still: "accepted in His *person*" before He became man. Accepted in Him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." "Accepted *in the Beloved*." It is not the *whole* truth that we are accepted for His merits and His atonement, though that *is* true. But here the record calls us back to a past eternity, and tells us of our being made "accepted *in the Beloved*." "Before the mountains were brought forth, and while as yet God had not made the earth, nor the field, nor the highest part of the dust of the world," the Son of God was His Beloved, and "was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; and His delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 30, 31). But, "forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." And when in the days of His flesh He dwelt among us, again and again the heavens were

opened, as if the Father could not restrain His longing to utter, in an audible voice, the love that was overflowing in His heart for Him who had come down from heaven to do His will and save His people by the sacrifice of Himself.

At His baptism we hear Him, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

On the Mount of Transfiguration we hear Him: "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." And now that He has "made reconciliation for iniquity, and made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness," glorifying His Father on the earth, no thought can grasp the Divine and unspeakable love the Father hath for His beloved Son. He hath won, as it were, a new title to the love of God: "*Therefore* doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again" (John x. 17).

Into this love, which was Christ's before the world was, and is yet again, and by a new title, His, God's grace hath gathered and *doth* gather a people chosen in Him; and this is their description —"they trust in Him." And yet there are multitudes of professing Christians who do not trust, or know, or believe that they are accepted in Him, and who do not enjoy the blessedness and rest of looking up into their Father's face

and recognising the love bestowed on them in the Father's Beloved, and the security that that love has surrounded them with! They think they are only accepted according to the measure of their prayers, their merits, their good works, and their faith, instead of according to the measure of the Father's everlasting love for His Son. Yet His life on earth, His temptations, His conflicts, His suffering death, and then His resurrection and ascension, were only the outflow of the everlasting love that gave us a place and a name and acceptance in the Beloved.

Yes! we are here plainly taught that our acceptance in the *first* place was not even on account of *Christ's own* merits, or prayers, or blood, or sacrifice, much less *ours*, but solely and only on account of our relation to His person as God's Beloved One; and the subsequent interference of sin only brought out the resources of redemption, forgiveness, salvation, and adoption in Him "in whom all fulness dwells."

It was as our *kinsman* He came to our relief, to put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

We had incurred a tremendous debt, and our Daysman came to pay it.

We had committed a fearful crime, and Christ our Elder Brother came to expiate it.

We were polluted, but He came to wash away our pollution in His own blood. God came down to us that we might go up to Him through the rent veil of the crucified flesh of our dear Lord Jesus Christ.

We were under the curse—He was made a curse for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

We had contracted a fearful disease, and Christ came to be our Healer.

We were captives to him who had the power of death—Christ came to deliver us and disarm the usurper. And all this because our Father had made us accepted in the Beloved, according to the good pleasure of His will! *This* is God's truth; and oh! what rest it is for the heart that believes God; and when we get rest, we get assurance. It is done —"accepted" in the Beloved, "according to the good pleasure of His will."

The Lord has willed many things, but this is the chiefest of all; this He hath accomplished through the *good pleasure* of His will, this pleased Him most, to give us acceptance in the Beloved "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Our God is most gracious, but this is the crown of His grace!

Never shall we know, till we come to stand

before Him in His revealed majesty, what He is to us, what He has done for us, what He has been to us, and what He has endured from us! But then, perhaps, we shall fully know "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of the riches of the glory of the grace recorded in our text, "that according to the good pleasure of His will, and to the praise of the glory of His grace, He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." This in the *first* instance, and before all worlds, and *following* upon this, and because in Him, He was "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

And it is "to the praise of the glory of His *grace*." He does not say, of His holiness, or His justice, or His power—though surely these things are glorified in our acceptance—but, crowning all, "to the praise of the glory of His grace."

Grace is enthroned above all God's attributes, and we are invited to "the throne of grace." Well it is for us that we have to do with a God whose glory is His goodness, and whose acceptance of us in Christ is "to the praise of the glory of His grace." And if so, how completely and everlastingly accepted must we be who trust in Christ! "As He is, so are we in this present world." Accepted as Christ is accepted.

Is Christ made *nigh?* His people are as nigh as He is.

Is Christ *safe?* His people are as safe as He is.

God *delights* in His Beloved, and so He delights in His people.

Is Christ *complete?* So are His people complete in Him.

Is Christ well *attended?* All the hosts of heaven wait on Him; and His people are well attended also, for "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

Is Christ enthroned? So shall His people be, for His promise is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne."

Perhaps, poor soul, you think it a difficult matter to move God to make *you* accepted in the Beloved. See, it is "to the praise of the glory of His grace" to do so; and therefore you cannot do more for His glory, or for the good pleasure of His will, than to come and trust Him.

Is He God's Beloved? And shall He not be our Beloved?

Does God love Him for His own sake, above and beyond all other considerations whatsoever, and

shall we not esteem and love Him for His own sake? Has God made us accepted in the Beloved? Then shall we not fear sin, or death, or judgment. God has provided for all in Christ, or He would not now be on the throne, at His right hand.

Hath God "made us accepted in the Beloved"? It is "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Then go to God in His name only. Not our perfected holiness, or even our consummated glory is so much the cause of our acceptance as our *relationship* to Him. See, then, to it that we are wholly for Him and not for another.

See, also, what a rock we have to fly to! What an inheritance we have to enjoy! May God enable us to apprehend and understand these wonderful truths more and more!

God *accepting* us in Christ.

God *choosing* us in Christ.

God *predestinating* and *adopting* us into His family in Christ, and all according to God's good pleasure, and to the praise of the glory of His grace.

Oh, it is sanctifying truth! And just in proportion as God the Holy Ghost reveals it to our understandings, will our conversation be in heaven.

REDEEMED AND FORGIVEN.

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."—*Eph.* i. 7.

ST. PAUL had enumerated seven blessings given us in Christ *before the world was.*

He now proceeds to enumerate and open out seven further blessings given us in Christ *since we became sinners.*

He is addressing those who "*trusted in Christ.*" May we also be provoked to jealousy, while we contemplate the wonders of the grace bestowed by God on those who trust in Him.

The blessings already bestowed in Christ before the world was, are :—

1. "Blessed with all spiritual blessings" (*v.* 3).
2. "Chosen in Him" (*v.* 4).
3. Perfectly holy in Him (*v.* 4).
4. Perfectly unblameable in Him (*v.* 4).
5. Perfectly loved in Him (*v.* 4).
6. "Predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ" unto God's own self (*v.* 5).

7. "Made accepted in the Beloved" (*v.* 6).

Evidently these are all super-creation blessings, eternally and from everlasting secured in Christ to every one who receives Him and trusts in Him. There is no distinction or difference of degree here. All these blessings are *in Christ*, and they were laid up in Him to be the possession of every soul who receives Him by faith. Moreover, these blessings belong to believers in Jesus Christ by virtue of their relationship to His *Person*: "in the Beloved."

We have now a further enumeration of subsequent blessings bestowed on believers, in time and since we became sinners, and possessed by us in Christ by virtue of His *merits*; and all contained in the inexhaustible fulness supplied to us in Him. Notice the change of tense:—

"In whom we *have*—

1. "Redemption through His blood" (*v.* 7).

2. "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (*v.* 7).

3. "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (*v.* 8), "according to the riches of His grace" (*v.* 7).

4. He hath "made known unto us the mystery of His will" (*v.* 9).

5. He will "gather together all things in Christ," "in the dispensation of the fulness of times" (*v.* 10).

6. "In whom we have obtained an inheritance" (*v.* 11).

7. In whom after we believed we were "sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (*v.* 13).

Blessings all subsequent to our sin and ruin.

Notice, moreover, how the whole Trinity is engaged in blessing us:—

"The Father," choosing us in Christ; blessing us with all spiritual blessings in Christ; predestinating us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself; and making us accepted in the Beloved.

"The Son," redeeming us by His blood, obtaining the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace.

"The Holy Ghost," abounding to us in all wisdom and prudence, the earnest of our inheritance and the seal of our persons, until the redemption of the purchased possession.

O see, and believe how the riches of God's grace hath abounded over the guilt and corruption of His people!

There is a purchased possession we have not yet, but it is *in Christ*. The inheritance to come is secured to us in Christ; He is our inheritance.

The believer trusting in Christ is like the angel in the Apocalypse, standing on earth and sea. Two worlds are his in Christ: the present is ours,

for "all things are ours," and the world to come is also ours. We *are* in Christ by grace, and we *have* all things in Christ by grace. Here the believer stands the heir of time and eternity. The riches of grace and glory are his, and the fulness of earth and heaven belong to him. Here are blessings, bestowed in Christ, to manifest God's *love*, "to the praise of His glory," and to manifest God's *mercy* "to the glory of His grace."

"Behold, what manner of love!"

1. Given us in Christ before the world was.

2. Commended to us in time "in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

God's love gave us a portion in His own Beloved in a past eternity, and there was no motive or reason for it but His own love. Talk of love! This is breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and it "passeth knowledge." The great God passed by all creation, and selected us to be His companions, giving us a portion in His Beloved; and this in the foreviews of all it would entail. And when He saw us go away from Him into darkness, alienation, opposition, corruption, misery, and enmity, He sent His Son to save us out of all; He came down to us in our own human nature, and He took us up out of our ruin, and redeemed us to God "by His blood." These are the "things which angels desire to look

into." God *giving us a portion in the Beloved* before the world was ; and then *redeeming us* by His blood after we had fallen from grace! God's love *given*, and God's love *commended*. "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." What shall we render unto the Lord. for all His benefits to us? Let us take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord Let us *live* salvation, and *sing* salvation, and *boast* salvation, and *proclaim* salvation! Salvation secured to us in Christ before the world was ; and effected for us and bestowed on us by Christ in the fulness of time, and when sin had defiled us and the law of God had condemned us.

The objects of God's everlasting love are described, in Rom. ix. 22, as "*vessels of mercy*." Mercy implies their misery, ruin, want, need, sin, corruption, unworthiness, enmity against God ; and mercy is His supply and gift :—

1. For the display of the glory of His grace in redeeming love.

2. To manifest how great were the difficulties that love would surmount.

Thus, Christ is ours by a double relationship: He

is our *Head*, and He is our *Redeemer*. The redemption is the lesser grace. His Person is more than His benefits. His love is more than His sufferings for us. *Himself* more than all! "How shall He not with Him also freely give us *all* things?"

GRACE ABOUNDING IN WISDOM AND PRUDENCE.

"Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."—*Eph.* i. 8.

THE subjects here brought before us are intended to induce *trust in Christ*, and that we who know Him may trust Him more and more. None trust Him as they ought. We cannot rely on Him too restfully; we cannot confide with too much confidence in Jesus. There are depths in His love that we have never yet fathomed. There are heights we have never yet reached, and lengths and breadths of which we know but little. "They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." But the very desire to trust is a fruit of super-abounding grace.

For "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." This evidently refers to the *internal* work of the Holy Ghost on the soul. No amount of Gospel preaching can reach the dead or touch the heart. God has to deal with blind eyes, deaf ears, dead souls, and alienated

hearts, and no external manifestation of love and grace are sufficient to meet this need. It is not enough that in the riches of His grace He has given us Christ, and that He has become incarnate, that He died and rose again, and lives at the right hand of God, ever living to make intercession for all who come unto God by Him. All this passes over us again and again. We have heard that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We need the quickening, enlightening, converting power of the Holy Ghost. We need that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, should shine into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We need to be "strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man."

We need spiritual wisdom and prudence from Him that giveth "liberally and upbraideth not," even "the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind."

We need to be made wise unto salvation through Christ, not only to have our sins blotted out, in fact, but to *know* it, that we may enjoy His fulness, and live His life on earth. And this grace He also gives us in Christ, so that we not only have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness

of sins," but the riches of God's grace hath also abounded to us in "all wisdom and prudence."

If we have had spiritual wisdom to apprehend the things which belong to our peace, we owe it to the gift of the Holy Ghost.

If we have had spiritual prudence to accept God's gift, and come as poor guilty sinners to claim Christ as our Saviour and our Friend, this is the fruit of the spirit of wisdom, and of a sound mind bestowed and received through Jesus Christ.

"Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence,"—even that heavenly wisdom and prudence, bestowed on His people, *inclining* and *enabling* them spiritually and effectually to turn unto and embrace the love of God in Christ and walk suitably thereto, in this present evil world.

In Jer. xxxii., xxxix., xl., we also find this twofold gift mentioned. Speaking of His people and evidencing Himself as *their God*, He says, "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them,"—there is *wisdom.* "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me,"—there is *prudence.*

The word rendered "prudence" in our text is

the same as the "*wisdom of the just*" in Luke i. 17; that spiritual disposition and skill enabling us to walk worthy of our calling. See also Col. i. 9, 10, which is a comment on our text, "that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Thus men receive the knowledge of Christ, and then begin to walk with Christ, "putting on, as the elect of God, *holy* and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering."

For this *wisdom* see *v.* 17: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of *wisdom* and revelation in the knowledge of Him;" and for this *prudence* see Heb. xi. 13, 24, 25: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were *persuaded* of them, and *embraced* them, and *confessed* that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (*wisdom*); choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (*prudence*).

Job xxviii. 12–28 gives us the biography of the

wisdom and prudence of which we speak. "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof. For He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven; to make the weight for the winds; and He weigheth the waters by measure. When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder: then did He see it, and declare it; He prepared it, yea, and searched

it out. And unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is *wisdom;* and to depart from evil is understanding," or *prudence.*

See also in Psalm cvii. 43, and Hosea xiv. 9, where, after the most splendid descriptions of grace, mercy, and loving-kindness, in delivering His imprisoned captives, healing with His medicine those who are ready to die, gathering to His bosom the poor tempest-tossed mariners of earth, healing their backslidings and abounding to them in grace, the Holy Spirit concludes with, "Whoso is *wise,* and he shall understand these things; *prudent,* and he shall know them; even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."

May this grace of the Holy Spirit abound towards us till we make Christ our Refuge, hanging our hopes on Him, and finding our confidence in His love and care, "being careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving making our requests known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Note the fourfold gifts—*redemption, forgiveness, wisdom,* and *prudence.* Verily, "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life."

Let us learn to value blessings not merely by themselves, but by the grace that bestows them. Blessings from Christ, in time, are only the uprisings of an infinite river of love. They may seem to us but small, but they flow to us from the fountain of inexhaustible blessings. We are often unthankful, forgetting this. If we possess faith, we have it out of *boundless* faithfulness, and as a pledge of more to follow. If we love God, it comes out of the fulness of His own love to us, and *all love* is to follow.

1 Tim. i. 14: "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

But, it may be objected, is "*all* wisdom and prudence" really bestowed? Yes, all that is necessary. We have heavenly instruction in God's Word and the unction and teaching of the Holy Ghost, but we neglect the diligent and prayerful study of these things. "The diligent soul shall be made fat." "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him."

"God is able to make *all* grace abound toward

you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work."

"*All* spiritual blessings are laid up for you in Christ."

"By Him all that believe are justified from *all* things."

All your trespasses are forgiven.

"*All* things are yours."

He hath abounded toward you in *all* wisdom and prudence.

"He that overcometh shall inherit *all* things."

Whom God saves, He makes wise unto salvation. And this wisdom and prudence are the outflow of the Holy Ghost in the heart, out of the overflow of God's everlasting love.

ALL THINGS TO BE GATHERED TOGETHER IN CHRIST.

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him."—*Eph.* i. 10.

IN the covenant arrangements of the Almighty, Christ our Lord was set up from everlasting as the beginning of all God's purposes and ways; and all things were created in Him, by Him, and for Him!

It is evident from the testimony of the Holy Ghost, in verse 3, that the Church was also given a potential interest in, and union with, Christ before the foundation of the world—an interest involving and securing to each member of His mystical Body the participation of "all spiritual blessings." And the subsequent and mysterious entrance of sin, with all its fearful consequences, in the meantime, did not and could not mar that purpose, or deprive His Church of the portion already given us in Christ, or "make the promise of God of none effect."

Sin, while it demonstrated the utter failure of the creature, served but as the background to bring out

and set forth yet more fully and prominently super-creation and superabounding grace, and "the revelation of mystery of God's will, according to His good pleasure which He had purposed in Himself," even to "gather together in one all things in Christ." The original signifies, to "*re*-gather together in one," implying a previous scattering, as well as a subsequent restoration and *re*-gathering, together the second time in one of all things in Christ. Sin had scattered things in heaven and in earth. It invaded and uprooted the harmony of the universe. God and His creatures were no longer at one. Sinful men and a holy God were separated from each other. Men and angels were separated; Jews and Gentiles; nation from nation, man from man, brother from brother: "hateful, and hating one another." Moreover, body and soul were separated. For "death came by sin, and after death the judgment." The final scattering! But our text reveals the mystery of God's will, even His purpose to gather again in one "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." (N.B.—No hint given or promise made for things in hell.) But God and saved sinners shall be again united; men and angels; Jews and Gentiles; nation with nation; body and soul; Bridegroom and Bride. And "all things in

heaven and earth evermore regathered together in Christ," is the unspeakable vision opened out to faith in this revelation of the mystery of our heavenly Father's will!

But at what a cost! For "judgment was brought to the line and righteousness to the plummet"! Christ must "finish the transgression and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in an everlasting righteousness;" and "the just must suffer for the unjust." "He who knew no sin must be made sin for us, that we may become the righteousness of God in Him." "His own self must bear our sins in His own body on the tree." "Wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Before there could be any regathering in *one* of "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;" before "mercy and truth could meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other;" before "truth could spring out of the earth and righteousness look down from heaven," and body and soul be again united, and death be "swallowed up in victory," there must be another mysterious and all-atoning scattering of things in heaven and things on earth! Accordingly, it was written: "Lo, I come to do Thy will,

O my God"; and, "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death."

When Christ came for our salvation, He was in His own Person, the perfection and summing up of all things in heaven and earth. All the perfections of Godhead and manhood were united in the Person of the God-man Christ Jesus; and His Cross was the equivalent, satisfaction, and atonement, for the previous scattering by sin of all things in heaven and earth. Listen to the mysterious cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We have no line to fathom these words. God and Christ scattered! And, again, He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." The Divine life and the human life scattered! The honour He might have immediately assumed as Firstborn of the universe laid aside and scattered! Soul and Body of God's Christ scattered! All His creatures forsook Him: no angel comforted Him or human being ministered to Him. His soul was made an offering for sin; His precious Body consigned to Joseph's tomb. Life, light, joy, fulness, happiness, peace, grace and glory, heaven and earth —all scattered! For He *emptied* Himself that we

might be filled with all the fulness of God! But truth was vindicated; the law was fulfilled; Satan spoiled; death conquered; and a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. He was delivered for our offences; He was raised again for our justification. And "the God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. xiii. 20).

"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." His resurrection and ascension are the pledges, earnests and firstfruits of the fulfilment of the revealed purpose of God, to "gather together in one all things in Christ." In the resurrection and ascension of the God-man, we see God and His creature man for evermore united in the Person of Christ and in the power of an endless life. As the fruit of His ascension, we have seen the Holy Ghost sent forth to proclaim God in Christ, "reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them."

We have seen the angel host again sent forth as "ministering spirits" to the sons of men. We have seen "the middle wall of partition between Jew and

Gentile broken down," and that "both are one in Christ." We have seen that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, but a new creature," and "faith that worketh by love." "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female—all believers are one in Christ Jesus." "If the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy. If the root be holy, so also are the branches." Moreover, in His resurrection and ascension, Christ is "become the first fruits of them that slept," the pledge, earnest, sample, and consecration of the great spiritual harvest that is soon to follow, when soul and body shall be reunited; when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; death shall be swallowed up in victory." For "we are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body;" and "our country is in the heavens, from whence we look for the Saviour to change our vile body, that it may be made like unto His glorious Body." He is waiting, and we are waiting. He, till His enemies are made His footstool; and we, till He shall come with His own glory, and His Father's glory, and the glory of the holy angels, "to take us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also." When we shall "all have come in the unity of the spirit, and in the knowledge

of the Son of God, unto a *perfect man*—unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"—"grown up in all things unto Him who is the Head, *then* shall be fulfilled the dispensation of the fulness of times, and God shall have gathered again together into one in Christ all His scattered family in heaven and earth, even in Him! This mystery of the will of God, made known for the obedience of our faith, reveals the hidden depths of His boundless love! Nor is there any argument I know of more calculated to convince the heart as to the deity of Christ and the inspiration of Scripture than this revelation of God's purpose: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." He will yet gather together again, in one, all things in Christ, filling them from His own fulness laid up in Him; gladdening them with His own joy; quickening them with His own life; beautifying them with His own glory; and sustaining them with His own power and resources. Great indeed must be our Lord, in whom and through whom such purposes are to be fulfilled! And divinely inspired must be the record in which they are revealed! Towards the fulfilment and manifestation in us of that purpose, all God's past dispensations of grace have tended. Note their order.

First, by the Holy Ghost given us and through the Gospel, He gathers His people into one faith and one baptism. Secondly, by faith, as by a spiritual nerve or sinew, He unites us with Christ, making us to become one flesh with Him, as it is written (Eph. v. 29), "No man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth it and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." Thirdly, He doth so unite us with Christ as to make us sons-in-law and daughters-in-law ; nay, He makes us so much nearer to Himself, by how much God and Christ are more nearly united, than any natural father and son can be. As it is written : "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." Fourthly, by our being thus gathered together in Christ, we are gathered into the whole body of Christ, and to all that exists under Him, and His angels become our "ministering spirits;" nay, more, we are gathered to all, who in God's predestination belong to Christ, and all things are ours. "The world, life, death ; things present and things to come ; all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Who can unfold the beauty and glory of this society? Even already, "Ye are come to the mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. xii. 22).

Oh, the depths of the riches of the wisdom and goodness of our God! There is a climax in our text. First, His grace in *creating* us, as Adam in innocency and angels before they fell. Next, His *upholding* grace, in preventing the fall of elect angels; and His long-suffering grace towards fallen sinners. But thirdly, and beyond all, was that manifestation of the exceeding riches and glory of His *redeeming* grace, in the gift of His Son, and His revealed purpose to regather us again to Himself in Him, the purchase of His blood, and the partakers of His Divine nature. Creating grace has been surpassed by preventing grace; and preventing grace again by restoring and adopting grace; and thus God has made known unto us the mystery of His will, and "His thoughts which are to usward." "God is love!" The measure of God's love to us has been the gift of His Son; and the neglect, crucifixion, and refusal of that gift has been the measure of man's enmity and alienation from God.

"MADE AN HERITAGE IN HIM."

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."—*Eph.* i. 11, 12.

THIS is the language of triumphant and exulting faith in God, without any doubts or misgivings or unworthy unbelief. We sinners who have been led to trust in Christ have obtained our inheritance *in Him*, "in whom, by whom, and for whom are all things." This grace is the overflow of everlasting love. It fills us with all the fulness of God.

In the Revised Version we have an additional truth brought out here, "in whom also we were *made an heritage*," made in Him the inheritance of God.

See also the Apostle's prayer, *v.* 18, "that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of *His inheritance in*

the saints;" for as "the Lord is the portion of His people," so also the Lord's portion is His people, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

Yes, God will "gather together to Himself in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him." In Rev. v., we have a prophetic vision of this. "The Lamb that was slain" receiving the heritage which man, as a sinner, had lost. The song of the redeemed around the throne, and of the angels round about the redeemed, and the further chorus of all creation tells the story: "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." O Lord God Almighty! "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and dost set him over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." "But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see *Jesus*," exalted over all, the pledge and earnest of our own dominion by-and-by, "when Christ who is our life

shall appear, and we shall also appear with Him in glory."

Christ has taken both our debts and ourselves into His own Person. On the cross He redeemed both His people and their inheritance. He was invested with His title to both at His resurrection. He took possession when He ascended to the right hand of God, and then He sent the Holy Ghost to bear witness, and be our earnest and seal until He comes again the second time to reign with us.

Meantime we stand on resurrection ground, inheriting and being inherited in Him, and "the greatness of God's exceeding power to usward who believe is according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead."

As by sin all things in heaven and earth were scattered, so also in Christ all shall be regathered. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' (1 Pet. i. 3–5).

Thus our faith! our inheritance! and ourselves! have their standing in the power of His resurrection, as it is written, "God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith." For "God is able to make *all grace* abound towards us; that we, *always* having *all* sufficiency in *all* things, may abound unto *every* good work," till we enter into possession of "the inheritance of the saints in light."

Who can tell what *that* means? Who can describe its glory? Who can imagine the melody of its songs? Who can picture its everlasting rest? "The *inheritance of the saints in light.*" *God Himself* in all His fulness is that Inheritance. *The Lord Jesus Christ* in all His fulness is the title to it, and *the Holy Ghost* indwelling in all His fulness is the qualification for our enjoyment of it. "An inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts xxvi. 18).

Sanctified in Christ from the only other inheritance of sinful man—an inheritance of shame, sin, death, judgment to come, and the eternity of woe thereafter.

By comparing the 5th and 11th verses, we learn that as the *children* are predestinated, so also is their *inheritance.* The children for the inheritance, and the inheritance for the children, and both predestinated "according to the good pleasure of His will." And this, most of all, pleases and glorifies God. It is "to the *praise* of His glory," to receive poor, weary, sinful, needy souls, who trust in Him, and to become their Inheritance! It is "according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." It is to the *praise* of His glory!

Our Lord is a great worker! He is surrounded by His works, and they glorify Him. But here we see *the* work which cost Him most, and which it *pleased* Him most to accomplish. It cost Him but a *word* to create, but it cost Him "*Christ crucified*" to redeem.

"That we should be to the praise of His *glory!*" The Lord counts it a great matter to have His glory praised. He bestows the riches of His grace *on* us, that He may obtain the praise of His glory *from* us.

This is delightful and sanctifying truth, even that God seeks His peculiar treasure and inheritance in His people. In them He finds His love gratified, His grace glorified, and His fulness displayed and communicated.

Love lives in love. "God is love!" and He seeks an inheritance in the love of His redeemed, in "fulfilling their desires," in ministering to their needs, and "crowning them with loving-kindnesses and tender mercies."

And therefore has He *chosen* us, *blessed* us, *adopted* us, *accepted* us, *redeemed* us, *forgiven* us, *abounded* toward us in grace and love, taking us for His own inheritance in Christ, and *sealing* us with that holy Spirit of promise "which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." And all this not on the ground of human merit, purchase, labour, or even desire on our part, but *in Christ* and for Christ's sake, "that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."

Evidently some very special privilege is here indicated, concerning the calling in grace of those who *first* (or beforehand) trusted in Christ; and I think we may clearly gather the mind of the Spirit in this remarkable statement, by referring to our Lord's own prayer for those who had believed on Him or who *shall* believe on Him through His Father's Word: as recorded in John xvii. 20–26. For (1) Christ prayed for them, "that they all may be *one*; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us;" a real, vital,

physical, personal union. (2) Christ declares that He had bestowed on them the glory His Father had given Him, as their qualification for that ineffable union, "that they may be one, even as we are one." (3) Christ declares that it is by them being thus made perfect in *one* He will have the world know ". . . that Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me." (4) Christ declares He will have them where He is, that they may behold His glory. (5) And finally, He declares that as He had declared unto them His Father's name, so He would continue to declare it, in order that the love wherewith God had loved Him might be *in them*, and He *Himself* in them. Thus it shall come to pass, that we shall be to "the *praise of His glory*, who first trusted in Christ." For "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. Which were born, not of blood"—Christian parentage cannot transmit it,—"nor of the will of the flesh"—the fallen creature cannot form it in himself,—"nor of the will of man"—no minister can beget it in his hearers,—"but of God." "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit."

Happy also are the young, who trust Him early; and before the world, the flesh, and the devil get possession of them, they too shall be to the praise of His glory.

Our heavenly Father seeks an inheritance now in the trust of His people, and by-and-by it will be in the praises of His people. Let us meantime comfort our hearts and say, "I am my beloved's, and His desire is towards me" (Song of Sol. vii. 10).

OUR INHERITANCE.

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will."—*Eph.* i. 11.

"IN *whom* we have obtained an inheritance." God is a bountiful God! He pours His benefits on the unthankful. He gives men health, food, riches, honour in this world, and all things richly to enjoy. But the inheritance spoken of here is for those who *trust Him.* The inheritance is the *children's* portion.

Inheritance and sonship are convertible terms. We enter on this inheritance, not by purchase, or merit, or labour, or desire on our part, but by *birthright.* We are born into it, and we inherit by virtue of union with Christ, and as joint heirs with the Son of God, the Firstborn of the family of God.

"We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also

written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Acts xiii. 32, 33).

Jesus Christ, being raised from the dead for our justification, has entered on our behalf and by a new birthright into our lost inheritance, by Christ's resurrection God hath begotten us again unto a living hope, a hope that quickens while it attracts. For see the grandeur of our position in a risen Christ! Judgment behind us, glory before us, and all enemies beneath our feet! Christ has ascended on high in the power of an endless life, and taken possession of a new inheritance which He has won by a new title, and which He can share with all "who come unto God by Him."

We have an inheritance of *glory* in Him, and *God* has an inheritance of glory in us! Our inheritance in Christ is "*incorruptible*."

It is "*undefiled*"—nothing like it here.

It "*fadeth not away*." Earthly hopes wither and earthly portions fail. Our country is in the heavens.

It is "*reserved in heaven*" for us. Nothing is safe here—wealth, friends, property—nothing safe. *There* all is safe. "Reserved in heaven," "where no thief approacheth and no moth corrupteth." And it is reserved *for us*—poor, guilty, needy *us*, and we are reserved for it. "Kept by the power of God,"

the same power that raised Christ from the dead, "through faith unto *salvation*." One word is used for this undefiled and incorruptible inheritance—*salvation*. It takes all in! "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." *Salvation* means a deal more than people think. It is eternal deliverance from death, condemnation, alienation, corruption, all that makes life a ruin and a crime. But that is the least part of it. Salvation is unto eternal life, as well as from "shame and everlasting contempt."

We are "called into the *fellowship* of God's dear Son:" that is, into *partnership* with Him who is the Firstborn, and into whose hands all things are given: "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." We obtain all in receiving Him, for "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Our God in Christ comes down to us just as we are, and presents us with His unspeakable gift. Our King of glory gives us all things in Christ, and the moment a sinner receives *Christ* he is born of God; he becomes a partaker of the Divine nature, and thus possesses a Divine qualification for his Divine inheritance. The Lord God Himself is our inheritance, and the *God-man* Christ Jesus is our title; with His own blood He has

cancelled our debt and secured our title; in His own person He is the representative above of all who trust in Him. But then we need a Divine qualification, also, to enable us to enjoy our inheritance, and God the Holy Ghost within us is that qualification. God *for* us, God *with* us, and God *in* us is the everlasting portion of His people. Out of all other inheritances we shall soon be shaken, but this *abideth.*

For "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness [is of Me, saith the Lord" (Isa. liv. 17). His universal invitation immediately follows this most gracious promise: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." God knows His promises are enough to make us thirst.

See again *vv.* 4, 5: "Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame. . . . Thy Maker is thine Husband; the Lord of hosts is His name."

For "ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. vii. 4).

"O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not

comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord ; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established : thou shalt be far from oppression ; for thou shalt not fear : and from terror ; for it shall not come near thee. . . . This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord" (Isa. liv. 11).

Mark our title-deeds ! the *oath* and the *righteousness !* "Their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord": that is the title. And the *security* is God's oath (*v.* 9): "For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee." When Noah came forth from the ark he offered burnt offerings to God : they were Christ, in figure.

It is written (Gen. viii. 20, 21): "And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord ; and took of EVERY clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour ; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more

for man's sake; *although* the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (see margin).

Oh that all men would come to Him by faith, and trust Him, claim the title, and enjoy the possession. "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." All in Christ! God's inheritance in us, and our inheritance in God. For "He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Our inheritance is among "them that are sanctified." "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb. xii. 22, 23).

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the

generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death."

"See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." The door is open, the grace is free, the way is sprinkled and consecrated for us up to the mercy seat itself. We do not *see* these things as yet with our bodily eyes, for we live by faith and not by sight, but our warrant is the oath and promise of Him with whom we have to do, and in whose faithfulness we may rest.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life."

"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

"To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written."

"To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations."

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels."

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more

out; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God."

And last, but not least: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My Throne."

These are no idle fables, but the true words of the living God; and they lie at our feet this moment, to be received or rejected. We must do one or other.

THE BIOGRAPHY OF TRUST.

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."—*Eph.* i. 13.

"IN whom ye also trusted." Trust in Christ is the *fruit* of faith in Him. We cannot believe God's record concerning Christ without trusting in Him; and faith, which is the root of trust, cometh by hearing the word of the truth of the gospel. The word *heard* produces faith, and the Holy Ghost is the seal of the word *believed*. "In whom ye also trusted, *after* that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also *after* that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance."

To trust in Christ is to rely on His word, to rest in Him, to wait on Him, to expect help from Him; and to continue to wait upon Him and expect help from Him according to what He has promised to

be to us, to give us, and do for us, notwithstanding delays, disappointments, oppositions, or difficulties from within or without.

Trust in Jesus Christ regards Him from our standpoint as He is revealed to us in the word of the truth of the gospel. But the gospel reveals Him to us from God's standpoint as "all in all," made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. There is nothing that God sees to be good for us that we may not have by trusting in Christ. "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Imagine being in the centre of the circle of mercies!—mercy above, mercy beneath, mercy around us. All God's fulness is laid up for us in Jesus Christ, and abounds to us in superabounding mercies. Do we quite believe this? If so, should we not have more joy, and rest, and peace in believing? Oh, let us believe more firmly, and trust Him more confidently, taking God at His word. For there is not a promise in Scripture that does not belong to us. Christ is ours, heaven is ours, pardon is ours: "all things are yours; for ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."

"Having nothing, and yet possessing all things." A strange paradox! but it is the truth of God. We have no merit or righteousness of our own—

nothing that God can look at, but yet in Christ "*possessing all things.*"

Even Christ Himself, with all His fulness of salvation, all His preciousness, all His promises, assured to us by the oath of God, and sealed to us by the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that believe.

In *vv.* 12 and 13, two dispensations are joined in one. Those Old Testament saints to whom He was first preached, and who saw Him only in the types and shadow of the Old Testament dispensation, *they* are all "to the praise of His glory." Enoch, and Moses, and Samuel, and Elijah, and David, "who first trusted in Christ," and not they only, but "ye also" are to the praise of His glory, "in whom ye *also* trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom ye *also* were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise"—both one in Christ.

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 13).

"One body!" Only think! The eternal Son of God in our nature is the *Head* of it; the eternal Spirit of the living God is the living *Inhabitant* of it; the blood shed on Calvary is the

foundation of it; and every believer in Jesus Christ is a *member* of it. Reader! "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would give thee *living water*. . . . . This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."

"In whom ye *also* trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." For "Gentiles, are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promises in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. iii. 6). "Fellow-heirs." *We* who trusted after that we heard the word of truth, and *those* who trusted beforehand, are *fellow-heirs* in and with Christ by the gospel.

What is this gospel?—glad tidings of great joy. Not concerning you or me; there is no good news about us. We have been by nature and practice enemies of God, dead in trespasses and sins. The gospel is "*concerning His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.*" The gospel is *all good news about Him*,—who He is, why He came, what He has done, where He is gone, what He is doing there, what He has promised and to whom (Rom. i. 3).

See also *vv.* 16, 17: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the

Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." This gospel is God's own appointed means for communicating to our souls in the hearing and believing it, the possession of Him of whom it witnesses! and also the qualification for enjoying that possession, even the indwelling Holy Ghost Himself! "What?" believers, "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which ye have of God?" "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?"

This gospel is "the word of the truth," therefore believe it. It is the gospel of our salvation, therefore let us rejoice in it. "God is love!" and "He has commended His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Is not this good news? "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." A new and a living way is opened for us and consecrated to us through the rent veil of the body of Jesus Christ, and we are invited, and are welcome to come boldly to the throne of grace. It is "the word of the truth of the gospel,"—grand news *for* us concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. "In whom ye also believed, after that ye heard the word of truth." We have the Apostle using similar

language in his Epistle to the Colossians, where he gives thanks to God for "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, *whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel*" (Col. i. 5).

Jesus Christ was the promise of the Old Testament to be believed. The Holy Ghost is the promise of the New Testament, and is from Christ to us who believe the *seal* of our union with Him.

"In whom ye also trusted." There are three truths here stated, and referring in common to both those who first trusted in Christ and "*ye also.*"

1. "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth."

2. "In whom also we have *obtained an inheritance*" (*v.* 11).

3. "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." We both have *trusted.* We have both obtained an *inheritance.* We have both been *sealed.*

Sealed to what? Sealed to "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." Sealed into Christ. Sealed unto all the promises of the gospel and all the privileges of the New Testament in Christ's blood.

"*Chosen!* in Him before the foundation of the

world." *Blessed! adopted! accepted! redeemed! forgiven!*—and sealed for all these in Him! The Son of God did not leave His throne and come down here to effect a half-accomplished salvation. His is a *finished work.* What is left us to do but to receive Him? "And to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." We have but to walk by faith through the length and breadth of our inheritance, claiming it in His name and for His sake. We have but to believe what He says, and thus be sealed into all that God has promised and Christ has purchased. God is the *Sealer*, the Holy Ghost is the *seal*, and the believing sinner the *sealed* one; and the fulness of the Godhead bodily laid up in Christ is the *inheritance* to which he is sealed.

That "*we* should be to the praise of His glory." The Jews first, and we Gentiles after, joint partakers of the same grace, joint heirs of the same inheritance, "fellow partakers of God's promises in Christ by the gospel."

Faith is seated in two faculties of our being—the *understanding* and the *will;* and, accordingly, the gospel presents two facts in order to *arrest*

the understanding, and to *control* and *attract* the will.

1. The *greatest truth* is revealed for the understanding, even the faithful saying, "that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners."

The *greatest good* is proposed to the will, "even the gospel of our salvation." "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Enough, surely, to arrest the understanding and attract the will. And when the understanding is arrested and the will attracted, this persuasion will affect the heart; and "with the heart man believeth *unto righteousness*."

The *foundation* of our trust is "the word of the truth of the gospel."

The *nature* of our trust is repose, reliance, recumbency, security, peace, power; and the *fruit* of our trust is union, identification, fellowship with Him in whom we trust.

SEALED.

"In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."—*Eph.* i. 13.

NO one who has not prayerfully considered this subject can form an idea of its depths.

Here is an office and grace of the Holy Spirit distinct from and additional to faith, yet inseparably associated with it. He is *the seal* of God Himself upon His believing child.

Note the order of this sealing—"after ye believed"—of those who trusted. We have been already told we were *chosen! blessed! adopted! accepted! redeemed! forgiven!* and *made an heritage!* in Christ.

Now, in addition to all, this great fact is added: "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were *sealed* with that holy Spirit of promise." This is the consummation of our Divine security. The shepherds of earthly flocks seal them separately with their own name, for distinction and identification. Their seal is a *dead thing*, but it marks the

owner's property. God seals His flock individually for His own possession by a *living seal*—the Holy Ghost.

The Spirit of God is not said to seal our inheritance, nor our adoption, nor our forgiveness; but it is *we* who are sealed: "In whom also after that ye believed, *ye were sealed*."

The Holy Ghost, the third Person in the Blessed Trinity, the Holy Spirit of promise, with all His fulness of life, and love, and power, is the *seal of God* upon His own. And not merely or chiefly His gifts, graces, influences, comforts only, but *Himself* is our seal! And not our interest, or our acceptance, or our inheritance, but *ourselves* are sealed! This is God's truth. Oh, how precious must we be to God, who has not only given His Son to die for our sins and redeem us to an inheritance predestinated for us, but has also made us in Him an inheritance and possession for Himself, sealing us unto the day of redemption. The inheritance *is* sealed to us; redemption does that. But this is a different thing. *We* ourselves are sealed by the Holy Ghost unto the day of redemption.

Blessed security for God's believing people! The *sealer* is God Himself; the believer is the possession *sealed*; and the holy Spirit of promise is the *seal*.

"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" This is a sanctifying truth!

The metaphor here employed alludes to the ordinary use of a seal amongst men.

1. A seal is affixed to valuable property for its *protection*, *identification*, and *security*. It does not make the property precious, or give it value; but because it is valuable the owner seals it for its protection. Because we are valuable to God, the Holy Ghost seals us. We are His jewels: united to Christ, members of His body—of His flesh and of His bones—and therefore the Holy Ghost seals us.

2. A seal is affixed to a man's act and deed, to make it irreversible.

3. A seal affixed is a public attestation and token of the sealer's promise, purpose, and undertaking. When the believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit, this is God's public assertion before earth and heaven that *His* act and will and deed is the salvation of His redeemed. No wonder the apostle writes: "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to

separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." Love that gave Christ for us accepts and seals us in Christ, His Holy Spirit Himself being the eternal seal! God's gift of the Holy Ghost is the *greatest evidence* God can give of a man's acceptance in Christ. In Acts x. 43, 44, we read: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever *believeth* in Him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the *Holy Ghost fell* on all them which *heard* the word." Mark the order! First, they *heard;* then, hearing, they *believed;* and, believing, the *Holy Ghost* took possession of them, the seal of God on their persons. See also Acts xv. 8: "And God, which knoweth their hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us." See also 1 John iii. 24: "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." 1 John iv. 13: "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." 1 John v. 8: "And there are three that bare witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood." The Spirit beareth witness in the word; the blood beareth witness to the conscience; and the water beareth witness in the daily life. Every seal is a witness, although every witness is not a seal. But the Holy Ghost is

both witness and seal. He witnesses by the word and takes possession of the soul that He regenerates. This is God's order: the Holy Ghost regenerates before indwelling; builds His house before occupying it; constructs His temple before taking up His abode in it. God first sends us the *life* of His Son, and then He sends us the Spirit of His Son. First, He gives us to believe, and then seals us unto the day of redemption; first our spirits, and secondly our bodies. "For if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your *mortal bodies* by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11).

4. A seal imparts its own image and likeness to that which is sealed. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." A new understanding, a new will, new affections, a new creation—a Divine nature! God's Spirit seals Christ into the soul! "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."

5. A seal establishes a matter. See 2 Cor. i. 21 (where this is defined): "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."

6. Probably there may be an allusion to Acts xix.

1–16. Formerly such signs followed ; but now we live by faith, not by sight.

If it be asked, "How, then, can I know if I am sealed?" By the actings and operations of the Holy Ghost! After that ye *heard* the gospel of your salvation, ye also trusted, and after that ye *believed* ye were *sealed.* Have we heard the gospel? Not only with the *outward* ear, but also with the heart, the *inward* ear. Has the word of God entered into our hearts? Have our eyes been opened to see something of the beauty of Jesus? Have we received Him? If this is so indeed, then give the Holy Ghost the credit: He it is who alone has opened your eyes. As it is written: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And, again, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Have our hearts been softened under His messages of grace and love? Who gave us a new heart? "That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The natural man receiveth "not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ;

neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Oh, give the Holy Spirit the credit and the praise, if we have light to see heavenly things, if our ears have been opened to hear the Father's voice, and our steps have been directed aright. For God the Holy Ghost is the Quickener, Teacher, Leader; and it is because He has sealed us unto the day of redemption He has been operating on our souls.

We shall gather much light on this subject of sealing by seeking to understand St. John vi. 27: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for *Him* hath God the Father *sealed*." Notice, Christ's knowledge of this fact was His comfort. "Him hath God the Father sealed"; Him hath He owned, constituted, set apart, authorized, qualified, accepted, made sufficient, sealed for His great work, and attested by the Holy Ghost Himself descending upon Him at His baptism, consecrating and sealing Him as the Head of His mystical Body; God's own messenger to the sons of men, the depositary of eternal life, the fountain opened for sin and all uncleanness; God's provision for sinners, sealed and supplied in Him.

Let us therefore go to Him, live in Him, feed on

Him, receive from Him; for believers are sealed into Him by the Holy Ghost, to qualify them for their heavenly calling. In Christ a man is called to a new relationship into God, a *child;* a new relationship into Christ, a *member* of His body; a new relationship to each other, fellow members, *brethren.* He is called into a new position in the world, a witness for Christ; he is made a new creature in Christ, and the Holy Ghost imparts a new nature, and stamps the impress of God's likeness upon his character, to fit him for the new position he is to occupy.

All believers are *thus* sealed, and *equally* so. They are equally united to Christ, and equally indwelt by the Holy Ghost. "For by one Spirit are we *all* baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been *all* made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 13).

Why, then, are some Christians so much less holy, happy, assured, than others? The answer is suggested in the text: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Alas! we grieve the Holy Spirit. There is no question as to His *sealing* us; but can a man who grieves Him in his daily walk and conversation be as happy, holy, assured as the man who lives to serve Him?

"Grieve" not the Holy Spirit. The word implies *unkindness* and *disappointment* to the Holy Spirit by our inconsistencies, and it also implies His love for us and His *concernment.* How can we grieve Him if He does not love us? But we grieve Him by our *indifference* to His glory. We grieve Him when we are forgetful of His presence, and heedless of His will concerning us.

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

THE EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE."

"Which is the *earnest* of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."—*Eph.* i. 14.

AN *earnest* is part of that which is to follow, and it is of the *same kind* as that of which it is the earnest. The earnest is not withdrawn. In this it differs from a pledge or bond. A pledge or bond is restored or cancelled when it is fulfilled. God's promise and oath are His pledges to His people, and they shall never be withdrawn till He has fulfilled His word. But the Holy Ghost given is the earnest of our inheritance; and he who gives an earnest pledges his faithfulness to give the rest. For this reason the earnest of the Spirit is called "the firstfruits of the Spirit." Now, the firstfruits of the harvest were a part, sample, and earnest of the harvest which would follow. The firstfruits, moreover, consecrated the coming harvest for the use of God's people. The Holy Ghost is the earnest *from God* to us of His inheritance in us; and He is, also, the earnest to us of *our* inheritance

in God. "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John iii. 24). "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1 John iv. 13).

Now, where the Spirit of the Lord is, the fruits of the Spirit follow.

Note how the Apostle arrives at the fact here that they had received the earnest of the Spirit. See *v.* 13. They had *heard* the gospel; they had *believed* on Christ, whom that gospel proclaims as the salvation of God, and the refuge of sinners, and, believing, they *trusted*. It is impossible to believe and not trust. And having *heard* and *believed* and *trusted*, they had also obtained in Him an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away. And into this Lord in whom they trusted they were sealed by the Holy Ghost, the earnest of their inheritance—the *sealing* securing them to God, the *earnest* securing the inheritance to themselves.

See also Ezek. xxxvi. 25. It is "the washing of water by the word"! "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." Trusting in Christ

makes Him *ours*. Trusting in Christ unites us to Christ. A man cannot trust in Jesus and yet not be united to Him. A man cannot know Christ and yet not possess Him; but *knowing* Him and being *united* to Him, we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and then the Holy Ghost seals us into Christ, and becomes "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."

"As many as *received* Him." Notice, all is in the *receiving*. It is not something we have to *do* or to suffer, but only to *receive:* "to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

"And because ye *are* sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). We probably repeat the Lord's prayer daily. We call Him *Father*, alas! often without apprehending that He is our Father. Let us not mock God. Believers have a rich, mighty, loving Father; and if we, being evil, know how to give good things to our children, how much more will He "give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

God first sends the life of His Son into the soul, and then the spirit of His Son into that soul.

First God the Holy Ghost gives us to believe

and then He seals us *as* believers. He first gives us the seal of the Spirit, and then He makes the sealing spirit to be the earnest of our inheritance. When we seal a document we remove the instrument that makes the impression; but when God seals it is altogether different, for He leaves the instrument with which He seals the soul to be the earnest of the inheritance "until the redemption of the purchased possession."

These truths are great and deep. They are comforts and consolations of God. It were better for us never to have heard of them if we do not drink into them. They are *living* waters. If we compare the passages in which the Holy Ghost is spoken of as our earnest, we shall find He is so in reference to our threefold state (2 Cor. v. 5, 8, 4).

1. "*At home in the body*," and absent from the Lord (*v.* 5).

2. *Absent from the body*, and present with the Lord (*v.* 8).

3. "Clothed upon with our house from heaven," mortality being swallowed up of life (*v.* 4), the adoption for which we wait, even the redemption of our body (Rom. viii. 23).

In the body, absent from the body, and in the resurrection body!

For the *first* and present state we read: "He

which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us, and given us the *earnest* of the Spirit in our hearts."

For the *second*—the intermediate state—we read: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given us *the earnest of the Spirit*" (2 Cor. v. 1, 5).

And for the third—the final glory state—we have the passage before us: "Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. i. 14).

For "if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your *mortal bodies*, by His Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii. 11).

Oh, how great, and passing all thought, must be the inheritance, the salvation, the home, and the final glory of which God the Holy Ghost is the seal and earnest! *God* Himself is our inheritance, *Christ* is our title to our inheritance, and the *Holy Ghost* within us is the earnest of our inheritance—a Divine title to a Divine inheritance!

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." He is the Spirit, He is the Lord, He is God, "He is all and in all." And He it is who is the seal of our *inheritance* and of our *persons*, and also our *earnest* "until the redemption of the purchased possession." God *for* us, God *with* us, God *in* us—the earnest of our inheritance till glory.

There can be no final falling away from this grace, of which the Holy Ghost is the seal and the earnest. There may be a falling away from a religious profession, but God cannot lose His earnest. Much has been given, but the rest is to follow.

Now, why is it that God doth reiterate these things so often, telling us again and again that He has sealed His believing people and given them the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts—given them His promises and His oath? It is surely to meet the awful and incorrigible unbelief in us, and to manifest the amazing and unspeakable love in God's heart to us poor sinners.

This earnest of the Spirit is not only our *security* but also our *ability* for the enjoyment of our inheritance in faith here and in fruition hereafter.

"As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10). And thus, having already given us so many promises, securities, oaths, witnesses *without* us, He now adds the seal and earnest *within*. Notice particularly the locality—the *heart*. In 2 Cor. i. 22, we are told that He "hath given us the earnest of His Spirit in our *hearts*." When God gives a man the Holy Ghost, his heart is the region where He bestows the gift. If the seal and earnest be not *there*, we have not the Holy Ghost.

When the Holy Ghost is the earnest of our inheritance, everything of the believer's is sealed unto the day of redemption.

Our *Head* has been sealed. He is the head of all principality and power. "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John vi. 27). *He* is our life, our title, our representative, our wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.

The *foundation* on which we rest is sealed. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ

depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19). Nay more, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."—No stint here.—"He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly (heart) shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." Eternal streams of faith, hope, love, comforts, strength, and blessings are at our disposal. Come, then, to the fountain-head, and abide there! Let us *receive* the living water. Let us *thirst*, stoop down, and *drink*, and *overflow* in blessing. Thus shall we be fruitful and satisfied. Amen.

"THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY."

"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."—*Eph.* i. 14.

THAT must be a possession indeed, the bestowal of which shall be not only to the glory of Jehovah, but "to the praise of His glory."

Observe the several things said here with regard to it.

The nature of it—an *inheritance.* It is a *choice* possession—the gift of God, and to the praise of His glory. It is an inheritance by *birthright.* It is a *purchased* possession. Who can estimate the price? It is a possession already obtained: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance" (*v.* 11). Obtained in Christ, the Holy Ghost Himself has sealed us unto it, He is also the earnest of it in our hearts, and He remains in us, our seal and earnest, "until the redemption of the purchased possession." For it is not yet finally redeemed.

Now let us endeavour, by degrees, to get some definite idea of this great subject

Our inheritance! As condemned lost sinners in ourselves, we have no inheritance of our own, save that of sin, and shame, and death, and hell. God gave Adam and Eve, in Him, a splendid inheritance. All things here below were under their dominion. But soon they lost their inheritance, their kingdom, their crown, their souls. And we lost all in them. Nevertheless, Adam was the image of Him that was to come, the Second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the appointed Heir of all things (Heb. i. 2, 3). God would never have created man if He had not had something in reserve to counteract the sin and misery he had brought on himself. And as all creation was erected to be a platform for the manifestation of His glory, so man made in His image was to be the chief monument of His grace.

God's Firstborn was Christ, He in whom He delighted. He gave all things into His hands; "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of His Person," and the appointed heir of all things. There was no need of any redemption or "purchased possession" for Christ, His was a divine birthright to all kingdoms in heaven and earth, for by eternal inheritance He had obtained a more excellent name than the angels, for He is God over all, blessed for ever, and by Him all things consist.

When our first parents fell into condemnation, and lost their inheritance, they did not and could not lose an interest in their Creator's love. The love that was from everlasting to everlasting in Christ Jesus was not lost to sinful man, though all was lost so far as man was concerned. And the predestined Heir of all things might have ascended His throne and remained in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. But man in whom He delighted, lost for ever, would have been an heir of death, and curse, and shame. If guilty sinners were nevertheless to inherit as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, their inheritance must be a *purchased* possession. The Son of God must redeem both man himself and his lost inheritance, and for this He must become our next-of-kin, and so He did, for "the dayspring from on high *visited* us;" He left His throne, and "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." And "forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of

the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death; and deliver them who were all their lifetime subject to bondage." On the cross of Calvary and on our behalf, and in our stead, "He was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." He "spoiled principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in Himself." He made Himself responsible to discharge, and did cancel, our terrible bond, the debt of sin and curse we had contracted, and He nailed it to His cross. And now, as Firstborn from the dead, He inherits by a new title, and with us, "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was." By His new title He entered heaven and sat down on the right hand of God, the Representative of His people and the gift of God. Oh, timeless, boundless, bottomless, costly love! Sin lost us our crown, but not our Saviour; and as many "as receive Him, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on His name." "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,"—not by virtue of His eternal Godhead, or of His eternal Sonship, but because He left His throne, and suffered, and died in our stead, "the Just for the unjust;" and now that He has overcome

death, rifled the tomb, and conquered all our foes. He has ascended into heaven by virtue of His own blood, and obtained eternal redemption for us."

"Our inheritance!" How shall we speak of it How set forth that mystery of grace? Adam's lost inheritance was one thing; the believer's inheritance in and with Christ is quite another thing. "Fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph. iii. 6), "quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come, God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 5, 7). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." The purchased possession! We are possessed for it by the Holy Ghost, and heaven is possessed for us by the Son of God.

There are many wonderful things written in Scripture concerning "the inheritance of the saints

in light," but what language can describe it? for *God Himself* is the inheritance of His people. God is *Christ's* inheritance, and the believer in Christ has joint inheritance with Christ in God. God is Christ's wealth, His rest, His home, but He is also the rest, and wealth, and joy, and home of him who is joint heir with Christ.

"The inheritance of the saints in light" is "among them which are sanctified," where God Himself doth "rest in His love, and joy over them with singing" in the joint possession of all things. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Rev. xxi. 7). We need not wonder that the Holy Ghost Himself is become the seal and earnest, for the purchased possession is worthy of such a seal and such an earnest.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is *born of God.*" "If any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature:* old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." A new birth; a new creature; a new inheritance; a new title, Christ! A new qualification and earnest, the indwelling Holy Ghost; "a new name which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it;" a new city; a new country; a new song "that no man can learn," but those who are redeemed from among men. "Thou

art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

"The redemption of the purchased possession!" Observe, it is a *possession.* Thank God, there is no question as to *that.* It has been obtained, possessed, bestowed, secured, sealed to us in Christ and by the Holy Ghost, though not yet finally redeemed, for we are still "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." A glorious resurrection assured to us by the promise, the earnest, and the seal. The R.V. renders God's *own* possession. If any believer in Christ is not assured, it is because he is not duly considering the *title deeds; they* are in heaven, and the believer's "life is hid with Christ in God."

And it is a *purchased* possession purchased to God and by Christ. The original signifies a preserved, guaranteed acquisition. The noun is the same as in 1 Pet. ii. 9: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a *peculiar* people;" the margin is "purchased," a purchased people, literally "intended for (God's) personal property," and purchased by the blood of Christ. Our Lord did not shed His blood for thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers,—they were

not worth it; but He shed His blood for fallen sinners, "the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28). The word "purchased possession" also signifies an acquisition *that is guarded*, as it is written "kept by the power of God."

Oh, wondrous grace! Redeemed, adopted, forgiven, guarded, sealed, endued by the Holy Ghost, the earnest of our inheritance, exalted into union with the Father's glory and the express image of His Person, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

But the possession is not yet fully redeemed. Redemption in the Bible is spoken of in two connections.

There is redemption by *payment of a price*,—and that is already done. Every believer has been redeemed, not with silver or gold, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

But there is another redemption spoken of, even a redemption *by power*, and that is not yet. Oh these poor frames of ours are sorry representatives of the power of God's redemption. Nay, we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, and are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and sealed unto the day of redemption,—even "we groan, being

burdened," carrying about with us a body of sin and death, liable to temptations, harassed by the world, the flesh, and the devil; and "we are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." Already, by grace, we have the *spirit* of adoption, but we are waiting for the time when "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." We are waiting for the resurrection, when the redemption already effected by price shall also be effected by *power*, when the grave shall give back her dead, and we shall be changed, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Till then sorrow and death hold part of our inheritance.

But when all are gathered in, when the Bride is ready for the Bridegroom, and the marriage of the Lamb is come, then shall redemption by power be effected. Till then our understandings are darkened, our affections wandering, and even the beautiful creation around us is groaning and travailing. Man's inheritance fell with man, and both are waiting for the redemption of the purchased possession.

The day is coming—are we longing for it?

—when He who sits upon the throne shall say, "Behold I make all things new," a new heaven and a new earth, and "God Himself shall dwell with men, and they shall be His people, and He will be their God."

Consider—1. Not only will God give us back the inheritance we have lost by sin, but He Himself shall become our inheritance.

2. Not only shall we be His inheritance, but also His purchased possession.

3. Meanwhile, and since we are still in the flesh, God has given us His Holy Spirit, our Comforter, to subdue, rescue, stablish, anoint, seal us, and be the earnest of our inheritance.

4. Our inheritance is not only kept for us, but we are kept by the power of God for our inheritance.

5. Finally, we have been *adopted* "according to the good pleasure of His will," *redeemed* and *forgiven* "according to the riches of His grace," and our purchased selves and our inheritance are and ever shall be "to the praise of His glory." Amen.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM.

Eph. i. 15–18.

IF it be inquired what warrant the Apostle Paul had for stating that the Ephesians to whom he wrote had been "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,"—had been "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world,"—had been "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ,"—had been "accepted in the Beloved," in whom they had "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,"—had been abundantly endowed, according to the riches of God's grace, with all "wisdom and prudence,"—had obtained and even constituted an inheritance in Christ, in whom also they had been sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, who was also the earnest of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession,—the answer is simple.

The Apostle had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints; and know-

ing by the Word of God and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, "that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ," "he ceased not to give thanks for them, making mention of them in his prayers."

"I also cease not" uniting with them in thanksgiving, and if he did so, much more *they;* but in order to this he endeavours to set before them a full view of their heavenly calling in Christ Jesus, praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge and for the acknowledgment of Him. See also in 1 Thess. i. 2–5, and compare chapter iii. 6, 9. See also 2 Thess. i. 3, and compare chapter ii. 13, 14.

Note—(1) To whom the Apostle prays. (2) The subject matter of his petition for these believing Ephesians. He addresses God in a twofold character in relation to Christ in His twofold nature.

1. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Father of glory, for Christ Jesus, God-man, is the brightness of His glory.

In former days and times, God was addressed by His people as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. He is now better known as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom all His promises are yea and amen, and "the Father of glory." Probably

there is an allusion to Exod. xxxiii. 13, 19, compared with chapter xxxiv. 5, 7. We may notice particularly there, that His "*way*," His "*grace*," His "*glory*," His "*goodness*," and His "*name*," are all as one! To Him the Apostle prays. That for which he prays is "the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in and for the knowledge of Him."

Already the Holy Ghost was set forth as their seal unto the day of redemption, and the earnest of their inheritance. Now further, as the spirit of wisdom and revelation within their hearts, a well of living water within, and "springing up into everlasting life"—receiving, revealing, and bestowing on them as they were able to bear it, the fulness of Him "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3).

"Wisdom and knowledge." Written for us in the gospel of God's grace; incarnate for us in the person of His anointed Son; and revealed to us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Cor. ii. 9–16).

Note the sphere, circumference, and range of the ministry of the Holy Ghost. "Him, and the knowledge of Him;" not grace, faith, holiness, hope, love, or the increase of these—not interest in Him, but the knowledge of Him. "He shall testify of Me." Note—the others are streams, this is the fountain.

The Holy Ghost is neither a rival nor supplement to Christ. "He shall not speak of Himself; what He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come" (John xvi. 13). Wisdom and revelation for the knowledge of Him was the Apostle's prayer for himself (Phil. iii. 10), "That I may know Him." See also his prayer for believers at Colosse (i. 9, 10).

It is in this knowledge we are renewed after His image (Col. iii. 10), and "have our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 3). It is in this knowledge, grace and peace is multiplied unto us, and we become partakers of the Divine nature (2 Peter i. 2–4), and our joy is made full (1 John i. 4). To this fellowship and communion with God in Christ, all believers are called (1 Cor. i. 9). The Apostle is praying for the utmost blessing his inspired light can reach unto. His eyes are on the topmost summit of the Eternal Throne. Angels desire to look into those things, but saints desire to know Him whom to know is "eternal life." Oh, it is this knowledge of God, and acquaintance with God, and fellowship with God in Christ, that attracts the heart and draws forth its newborn faith and hope and love, disentangling us from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Learn, then—1. *Where* this knowledge is to be

obtained (2 Cor. iv. 6). 2. *What* this knowledge requires. "The spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Eph. i. 17). How this knowledge is effected. "The eyes of our understanding opened" (*v.* 18). What this knowledge unfolds. "The hope of His calling" (*v.* 18); and "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in His saints" (*v.* 18); and "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe" (*v.* 19). The eye affects the heart, and the heart follows the understanding. Here we have eye, light, and object—all are given in the knowledge of Him. Read carefully 2 Cor. iv. 3, 6. The Apostle's prayer is direct and personal; "that God may give unto *you*," that *your* eyes may be opened, that *you* may know.

"The hope of *His* calling"—not yours, but *His* calling; not your knowledge of an interest in Him, but of His interest in you; not of *your* inheritance in Him, but of *His* inheritance in the saints. Everything in its own order. We see matters best and clearest from our human standpoint, when we have in the first instance regarded them from God's standpoint. Every man in a state of grace is privileged to have assurance of his calling. A whole Epistle was written for this end (1 John v. 13). We are called to "hope," "riches of glory," and "exceeding greatness of power."

God our Father will one day manifest to the universe how glorious He is, by revealing that glory in His people—"receiving them to the glory of God;" "calling them into His kingdom and glory;" "calling them even to His eternal glory when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe."

The Apostle prays for nothing which we may not all enjoy in the knowledge of Him.

"THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING."

'That ye may know what is the hope of His calling."—*Eph.* i. 18.

THE Apostle had heard of the faith and love of those Ephesians to whom he writes. Now as Jachin and Boaz, "strength" and "stability" were the two pillars at the entrance of the temple, so faith and love are the pillars at the threshold of God's spiritual temple in the hearts of men. This report of the Ephesian Christians kindled a corresponding and responsive love for them in the Apostle's heart, and this love manifested itself in his giving thanks, and praying without ceasing for them—prayer for them and thanks for them in equal latitude, as if he had said, "I have hitherto prayed and given thanks for you, but the tidings of your faith and love have given a fresh impetus to ask greater things for you, even 'that the eyes of your understanding being opened, ye may know the hope of His calling;' for 'God is faithful, by whom ye have been called unto the

fellowship of His Son Christ Jesus our Lord' (1 Cor. i. 9). 'I pray that ye may *know* it, and be enabled so to apprehend it, and so to enjoy the assurance and confidence of this hope . . . that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.'"

The Apostle's prayer was in harmony with his own convictions and desire. "I count not myself to have apprehended" (Phil. iii. 13). The more men's minds are in harmony with the revelations of God in His word on this subject, the greater is their Christianity. Communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the knowledge, reception, possession, and enjoyment of Christ, and our calling in Him, and in the hope itself, the ground of it, the grace of it, and the nature of it, is our highest attainment here. We perceive at once that these things are among the deep things of God—which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, but which God has revealed unto us by His Holy Spirit." Accordingly, the Apostle prays that the spirit of wisdom and revelation for and in the knowledge of Him may shed His heavenly light upon "the eyes of their understandings." Already they had faith and love, the *eyes* of the new-born soul, but the *best* eyes need light, and the quickened

heart yearns for the knowledge of and communion with its object.

By "the eyes of the understanding," he means of *the heart;* he is speaking of *heart work.* Whatever graces we possess shine by a borrowed light, just as stars reflect their suns: and all our gifts also work by a borrowed strength, for until the Holy Ghost bestows the spiritual faculty, the natural eyes are blind; and, after He has given us opened eyes, it is only "in His light we can see light." Thus it is written, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit." And, again, "Strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith" (Eph. iii. 17). It is by such revelations of Christ the Holy Ghost changes us into the same image, as it is written, "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18). Already, as believers in Christ, we are entitled in Him to all the spiritual blessing and Divine fulness laid up in Him; but for a fuller revelation of Him and of them the Apostle prays. If we may use an illustration, it is as if a man were taken during the *night* to some lofty eminence shrouded in darkness and mystery. Suppose him surrounded on every side by a landscape of sur-

passing beauty and glory as yet unseen. But presently the morning dawns, the sun arises, the shadows flee away, the mists disperse in all directions, rolling up the mountain side in curling wreaths, and disclosing to the man's delighted vision the glories of the inheritance that unfolds itself.

Such is the case before the Apostle's mind. The believers at Ephesus, to whom he is writing, having received Christ, had become "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ;" they had been "raised up together with Him, and made to sit down together with Him in heavenly places;" but mists of ignorance still veiled their eyes. They were enshrined in the love that passeth knowledge, and "called to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;" they were surrounded by angels and archangels, and the company of heaven; but they needed *light*. They needed that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, should shine into their hearts, and give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," and for this he prays. In Phil. iii. 14 he speaks of the believer's calling as "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Note, it is *a call*. We call to those afar off, and who are going astray It is a "*faithful*" calling unto the fellowship of His Son (1 Cor. i. 9). It is a HIGH calling,

even unto His kingdom and glory (1 Pet. v. 10). It is a *merciful* calling, even "out of darkness into His marvellous light." It is an *effectual* calling, even to the *obtaining* of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. ii. 14). It is a *heavenly* calling, out of death, and curse, and hell, and slavery, "into the liberty of the glory of the children of God;" a call from the fellowship of devils into the fellowship, not only of angels and archangels, and the company of heaven, but into "the fellowship of His Son, Christ Jesus, the Lord!" Even into co-partnership, co-membership, joint inheritorship, fellow-kinship, and to be of the same body, and "partakers of all God's promises in Christ by the gospel."

Yes, "called *by our gospel* to the obtaining of the *glory* of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. ii. 14). Called to receive, believe in, and enjoy Christ; *called* to grace and pardon, peace and paradise, to holiness here, and heaven both here and hereafter. Oh, to have the eyes of our hearts thus enlightened. Dwell for a moment on—(1) *The ground* of this hope. *His* calling! May He not do as He will with His own? (2) *The grace* of this hope. "The God of all grace has called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Pet. v. 10). When "the Lord Jesus Christ *called* blind Bartimeus" (Matt. xx. 32),

He also "commanded him *to be called*" (Mark x. 29); and He further commanded him to be "*brought unto Him*" (Luke xviii. 40). And thus it was with our apostle himself. "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. i. 15). (3) *The objects* of this hope. "Whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. viii. 29, 30). (4) The *subject* of this hope. "Christ *in you*, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. i. 27, 28). "May the God of this hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Blessed Master, give us eye-salve that we may see with what confidence, and full assurance "of understanding" (Col. ii. 2), "of faith" (Heb. x. 22), "of hope" (Heb. vi. 11), and "of love" (1 John iv. 17), our God would have His children possessed, and made happy—secured as well as happy, here below. The believer's hope

is his "anchor" for the storms, and his "helmet" for the daily battles of life. Perhaps some poor, unbelieving, unconverted outsider, or some hesitating borderer, may read these words. Come, poor soul, thou art called by our gospel—first, to come, just as thou art, to Jesus Christ for life and hope. And, secondly, called to God's eternal glory in and by Him, make your *calling* sure by *coming*, and then your election and final glory shall be sure also (2 Pet. i. 16). It is written, "If any man thirst, let him come;" "if any man lack wisdom, let him ask;" "if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me;" and, "if a man love Me, My Father will love him, and we will come in to him, and make our abode with him." Again, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," and "Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession for all who come unto God by Him." "I," saith He, "am the door, the way, the truth, and the life: by Me if any man enter in, he shall *be saved*, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

GOD'S INHERITANCE.

"The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." —*Eph.* i. 18.

AGAIN the Apostle prays that ye may know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Let us notice, and wonder, and worship, while we do so; for he speaks, not of *our* inheritance in God, but of *God's* inheritance in us who are His saints, for "the Lord's portion is His people." We need "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" for the attainment of such knowledge as this hope of *our* calling. It is in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent to us, and His thoughts which are to us-ward, the life eternal is apprehended, appreciated, and enjoyed. "In this knowledge we are renewed after the image of Him that created us." In this knowledge we are invited and encouraged to look for great things to come. In this knowledge it is we grow up unto Him in all things who is the head, even unto "a perfect man, to the measure

of the stature of the fulness of Christ." In this knowledge of God, we learn to love Him, trust Him, obey Him, and count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Our present theme suggests a climax of superabounding grace—our inheritance in God, God's inheritance in us; the glory of it, nay, more, "the *riches* of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Beloved reader, earthly illustrations are exhausted, human ingenuity is taxed, and human language fails, in the attempt to set forth the riches of the glory of the *believer's inheritance in God*. "The inheritance of the saints in light;" "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that passeth not away, reserved in heaven for us;" "our country in the heavens," where "He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among us"; and "where the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us; and God Himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes;" for "there shall be no more curse, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Heaven itself our home, and God Himself our portion,—blessed inheritance of the saints in light. Inheritance! not *pay* of the soldier, not *wages* of the labourer, not *reward* of the servant; but inheritance, the

birthright of the children of God. But it is *not* of our inheritance in God, but it is of the riches of the glory of God's inheritance *in us*, St. Paul is speaking here, and it is for the contemplation of *this*. He prays that the eyes of our understandings may be enlightened. It is by a new and heavenly birth God's children become entitled to their inheritance in God ; and it was by a strange and unspeakable new birth our God became entitled to His inheritance in us. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt amongst us, full of grace and truth ;" and "forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death ; and deliver them who were all their life time subject to bondage." The firstborn and only begotten Son of God became the first begotten from the dead ; and in the power of His resurrection, all the members of His mystical body are co-heirs with Him, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, the heir of all things, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the beginning of all His thoughts and ways, is our portion, and we are God's portion in Him. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is

given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace." The believer's inheritance in God is wonderful, but God's inheritance in His saints passeth knowledge. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory, the Holy Ghost in us for a habitation of God. Our persons His members, our hearts His throne, our praises His revenue of special glory: and His name shall be in our foreheads, and Christ Himself shall write it there, as it is written (Rev. iii. 12): "I will write upon him [that overcometh] the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God: . . . and I will write upon him My new name." "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in one." And it is this fact of God's inheritance being in His people which is the cause, source, reason, and security for their inheritance in God. As it is written: "All things are yours . . . the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Not even because Christ is yours, but because ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's, is His inheritance in us. This is the love that passeth knowledge, and which has placed us in *the centre* of its "breadth, and length, and depth, and height," that

we too may be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. iii. 18). God's inheritance is in *all* His saints, in *one* spirit are we all baptized into one body, and the head cannot say to the foot, "I have no need of thee" (1 Cor. xii. 12).

It is no small portion of the revelation of the mystery of God's will, that He who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, yet hath chosen sons and daughters of men for His peculiar treasure and inheritance of love. Love itself has sought a resting place, and has found and provided it in the hearts of the children of men. And it is simply amazing, and most calculated to win our hearts and our worship, to ponder over the many ways, and divers manners by which the great God assures us of the mutual and eternal interest we have in Him and He in us. The *revelation* to us of the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; the gift of us to Christ; our purchase to Himself by the blood of His Son; the inhabitation of us by His Spirit; His covenant of grace and peace; the *will* of the testator; our new birth, by faith, into the family of God; and our present investiture with the inheritance of the saints in light, for which we are sealed, and of which the Holy Ghost is the earnest until the redemption of the purchased possession:

all these pledges have been bestowed, and every relationship secures us! We are the children of the Father, we are members of Christ, we are temples of the Holy Ghost, we are the bride of the only begotten Son, we are the inheritance of God. His *wealth*, "vineyard," "flock," "portion," "kingdom," "inheritance;" His *ornament*, royal apparel, crown, diadem, jewels, in whom He is to be "glorified" and "admired" (2 Thess. i. 10). "Where His treasure is, there shall His heart be also." And there will He lay out His wealth of grace and glory.

Our inheritance in God is Christ, life, righteousness, peace, fulness, acceptance, Fatherhood, grace, and glory! But what can we say of *His* inheritance in us? Only this. That it is by His saints God intends to make known to principalities and powers in heavenly places His manifold wisdom, tenderness, long-suffering, patience, and the boundless and inexhaustible abundance of His mercies and pardoning love. For even as this dark world needs the sun, so doth the sun need a world such as ours to shine upon, else his fulness of light and quickening, gladdening power would be unrevealed. And as the fulness of the earth sets forth the beauty and recourses of the sun, so shall His vessels of mercy and His monuments of grace set forth the glory of

our God. You may remember God speaks of His people as His "garden." The figure is very instructive and very beautiful. What our gardens are to the sun, God's children are to Him. As each flower attracts and absorbs the sun's rays, receiving and reflecting his light and heat, and giving forth fragrance and fruit according to its nature, absorbing some rays and reflecting others, *but all together* setting forth in a variety of tints and shades, and fragrance and fruit, the infinite fulness and beauty of the light in which they dwell, —even so it shall be by-and-by when "the Sun of righteousness arises on us with healing in His wings." Each saint shall reflect some blessed aspect of His fulness of grace and glory. One shall set forth His patience, another His tenderness, another His faithfulness, another His strength, another His fulness, another His fruitfulness, another His loving-kindness and tender mercies, but all together shall show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the

chief spices : a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind ; and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits" (Song of Sol. iv. 12–16). "From me is thy fruit found."

Reader, what inheritance has God in you? what have you laid up for Him? (Song of Sol. vii. 13.) Has He done aught for you? and has He a portion in you for which we may pray that your eyes may be opened to behold it?

God's inheritance is in His saints! Will He neglect it? Will He fail to cultivate it? Will He lose any part of it? Oh you who know Him, "arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you."

BELIEVERS ENTHRONED IN CHRIST.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."—*Eph.* i. 19–21.

WE now approach the third petition of the Apostle for his believing brethren at Ephesus. Already he had prayed that the spirit of wisdom and revelation might be given them for the knowledge of Him, and that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might *know* the hope of His calling, *and* the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Note, he does *not pray for* these things; but he prays that the spirit of wisdom and revelation may open their eyes, and fully reveal these things to them, enabling them to apprehend and enjoy what was already theirs in God, and what was God's portion in them. He now further prays "that they might

know the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe," which, he tells them, is according to His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in "the heavenlies." And here we have another climax. According to God's power!—the greatness or might of His power—the exceeding greatness of it—"even according to the working of the exceeding might of His strength, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead" (R.V.). I beg of my reader to pause and prayerfully consider the fact here revealed to us. Beware of the delusion with which Satan ensnares the great mass of professing Christians. Men do not suspect themselves of unbelief in the Son of God. They have heard of Him all their days; the facts of His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension form their creed. Every child is taught to profess to believe Him; but, alas! what about any real individual, personal apprehension, reception, possession, and enjoyment of Christ and His salvation? I tell you—nay, the Holy Ghost tells you in this Word before us, that the man who really has believed and trusted in Jesus Christ for his soul's salvation has been already made the subject of the greatest recorded manifestation of the almighty power of God. And

St. Paul is here represented as in prayer that those Ephesians of whose faith and love he was assured, might have this fact revealed to their enlightened hearts by the Spirit of wisdom and understanding for the knowledge of Him.

Beloved reader, the quickening, enlightening, and conversion of a sinner, naturally dead in trespasses and sins, is no small matter; it cannot be effected by any created power. Whenever it takes place, and in whomsoever, it is according to the working of God's mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and exalted and enthroned Him above all principalities and powers in heaven or hell, in time or in eternity. You profess to be a believer in Christ Jesus. Has this power operated in your soul? If it has not, may God open the eyes of your understanding that you may see your true state before Him. If it has, may He grant you to know the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in you, and the exceeding greatness of the power that has operated on you, that you may walk worthy of God unto all pleasing.

This passage of Scripture suggests three matters for our prayerful obedience of faith.

1. Every one believing in our Lord Jesus Christ is a new creature, and is already the subject of

the operation of the exceeding greatness of the almighty power of God.

2. Every one believing in our Lord Jesus Christ is associated and identified with Him in His resurrection, exaltation, and glory. The same power that raised Christ has produced the faith that has received Him and trusted Him.

3. Why the Apostle presses this fact on the Ephesian Church.

Note carefully in this passage that "who believe" is hedged in with an almighty power on every side. Place the full stop where you will, and take the letter of the words, and they will evidently bear this sense: "who believe according to the working of His mighty power." Or if the stop is placed at "who believe," it will read thus: "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe;" it all comes to the same, and the Apostle is expressing the exceeding greatness of God's power as put forth *in the first working of faith.* Again, observe, he does not say what shall be, but what *is*, the exceeding greatness of this power. And yet again, he includes his own case, "to us-ward," a notable example. Thus we learn that when a sinful man really believes on the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation, this faith has been wrought in him by a power which human language is taxed to describe.

Faith as between man and man is an easy and a natural thing; but to believe implicitly in God is an unnatural thing to an alienated sinner, and requires an almighty power, without him and from above. For consider his case for a moment: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of those that believe not." "The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The enmity must be slain, the blinded eyes must be opened, the stony heart must be removed. The stronger than the strong *man* armed who keeps his house in peace must come upon him, and take from him his armour wherein he trusteth, and spoil his goods. God Himself must interfere and work *for* us, *in* us, *on* us, and *with* us. A man "must be born again," else he cannot see the kingdom of God. But "whosover believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature," and "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." This new creation is an exhibition of almighty power far surpassing the old. The old was passive, but the new presents active enmity, and moral as well as

physical difficulty; there is a kingdom without and within a man, to be overcome, before he can be translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Spiritually blind eyes must be opened; deaf ears unstopped, his understanding enlightened, his will converted, his alienated affections attracted and satisfied; old things must pass away, and all things must become new. The hour must have come "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God," for "He that was dead is made alive again, and he that was lost is found."

The second truth set forth in our text is this, that the almighty power operating on those who believe, is according to the greatest revealed manifestation of the power of God, even "according to the working of the might of His power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and His exaltation to God's throne in heaven as our Head and Representative, is everywhere set forth in Scripture as the greatest manifestation of God's almighty power, as well as of His everlasting and inexhaustible love. Joseph's tomb, where the Saviour lay, was guarded by Roman soldiers, and

a seal was put on the great stone upon the mouth of the sepulchre. But other and far different guards were there. Jesus Christ had died, the Just for the unjust. He had made Himself responsible to "make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness." "Judgment was now brought to the line and righteousness to the plummet," and every attribute of the Godhead had set to its seal on the tomb of our Substitute. Not until all the claims of law, and all the demands of justice and holiness and truth had been satisfied, God's honour vindicated, the everlasting covenant fulfilled in all its conditions, and all the salvation of God for the attainment of which He had sent Christ into our nature and into our world had been secured, could He be raised from the dead. But "the God of peace" brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood "of the everlasting covenant." He who "was delivered because of our offences, was raised again because of our justification."

And God's power to us-ward who believe, is according to the power which he wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. The faith He thus bestows unites us to and identifies us with Him who died and rose again, endows us with His entire

person, His atonement, and His exaltation. Thus identified, we have been crucified, dead, and buried together with Him, and we have also been raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, even as He is enthroned "far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Verily this resurrection of the Son of man out of the death and hell of our sins and condemnation, and His exaltation in our nature, and as our Head and Representative to the throne of God, is the greatest and costliest manifestation of the exceeding greatness of His almighty power — an exercise of power which has effectually overcome not only the physical, but the moral difficulties of the resurrection of the sinner's Substitute. He who made atonement for our sins, and gave Himself for us, "the Just for the unjust," is now enthroned at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. The Almighty power effecting this is as beyond all human thought, knowledge, and expression, as it is infinitely above all possibility of resistance! Listen, "Brethren, we also have become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that we might be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God"

(Rom. vii. 4). Again, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 2). "For God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, *even when we were dead in sins*, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 4, 5).

Beloved children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we are founded on, surrounded by, invested with, and enshrined in, God; and "His power to us-ward who believe, is according to the exceeding greatness of His almighty power, even the working of the power of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." The power of God, the power of the Cross, the power of Christ's resurrection, the power of the Holy Ghost, all, all are operating in the case of any of the sons or daughters of sinful men who believe on the name of the Son of God. No wonder, therefore, that the Apostle, having heard of their faith, ceased not to give thanks for his Ephesian brethren, and to pray that the eyes of their understanding might be opened more and more, that they might know the hope of his calling.

Finally, *why* does the Apostle thus pray and press this stupendous fact on believers at Ephesus, and on the Church of God? First, because it was his great delight and privilege to set forth "the

good pleasure of his heavenly Father's will," "the riches of His grace," "the praise of the glory of His grace," even "the praise of His glory." Secondly, for the comfort, assurance, joy unspeakable, and ever-abounding gladness of those he was instructing, and that they might be encouraged to "work out their own salvation," in the knowledge and fruition of the almighty power that worketh in us who believe! For the difficulty with many children of God seems not so much, "Shall I be raised up at the last?" but, "Shall I be kept in the meantime?" Now the power by which we believe is not only according to the mighty power that raised up Christ from the dead, but also according to the power that set Him at God's right hand far above all principalities and powers, and therefore the Apostle argues elsewhere, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is *in Christ Jesus* our Lord." Let us remember and never forget, it is a far greater work of grace to reconcile enemies than to keep them as friends; and if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the *death* of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. The

conversion of a sinner to God is a greater work than to glorify him. The former is a change of nature, the latter is only a further degree of grace. See then, believer in Jesus Christ, the hope of your calling, the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in you, and the nature and character of that wondrous principle of faith which unites you to Him. You are thus begotten unto God's family, made a partaker of Christ and an inheritor of all the promises, an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, inhabited and sealed by God the Holy Ghost, who is the earnest of your inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. And in the meantime, you have been saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, raised up together with Christ, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him, who is the Head over all things in His Church, to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

"And gave Him to be head over all things to His Church!"—*Eph.* i. 22.

HERE we are taught that the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe, has not only identified us with His Son's resurrection, and quickened us with His eternal life, exalting us in Him far above all principalities and powers, but also that He is our Head of union, authority, dominion, and influence over all things in heaven, earth, and hell; and as Head of His Church, our Lord Jesus Christ doth exert, and shall continue to exercise, this universal dominion in our behalf and for our benefit, controlling the forces of nature and the progress of events, directing the wheels of providence and the ministrations of angels, dispensing the Holy Ghost, and ordering the recourses of heaven and earth, so that all things shall work together for our good. May God our Father give us grace never to forget, amidst all the entanglements of time and sense, that as men and women

believing in Jesus Christ, we are individually and collectively headed up in Him, whose supremacy is universal, whose fulness is infinite, whose compassions fail not, who doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth, having "received power over all flesh, that He might give eternal life to as many as God has given Him;" and omnipotent ability, "to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

The Apostle Paul wrote two Epistles on this subject. (1) The Epistle to the Colossians, in which he sets forth the Headship of Christ *to* His Church and *over* His Church—and what He is as head to His body. (2) The Epistle to the Ephesians, where he sets forth more particularly what his body is to Christ as its Head.

Let us then for the present and in the first place consider Christ as the Head of His Church and as Head over all things to His Church. Turn to the Epistle to Colosse (chapter i.). It will do us good to feed our faith, hope, and love by contemplating *Him*, our God-given Head of life, influence, and love. Reading carefully *vv.* 15–18, we find Christ our Head, revealed in a *threefold* relationship—to God! to Creation! and to His Church! 1. "He

is the image of the invisible God." God made visible! as it is written, "He is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person" (Heb. i. 3). 2. "He is the firstborn of every creature;" the heir of all things, the Father's representative, the universal proprietor *in* whom, *by* whom, and *for* whom all things were created; and He is before all things—not He *was*, but He *is*; "*I am* that I am!" The universe had no being till He commanded it to be. "And by Him all things consist. Creation is upheld by Him, as well as created by Him. 3. He is the beginning, the source, spring, root, foundation, and origin of the new creation; the firstborn from the dead. A double firstborn is our Christ, and a double birthright belongs to Him —as Creator and as Redeemer.

He that was in the form of God, took on Him the form of a servant, and was made man; He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He was among the dead, but death could not detain Him; yea, He abolished death, through death He destroyed him that had the power of death, and rose again as the Head of His Church, and in the power of an endless life. Death hath no more dominion over Him, in that He died, He died unto sin once; and in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise let all His members

reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "In all things He hath the pre-eminence:" He is *first*, absolutely the first; without equal, without rival, without superior. The Head of His body, the Church. A people gathered out of all nations, for His name—and to the praise of the glory of His grace. Are we not entranced by the contemplation of this breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of a love that passeth knowledge?

The Head of the Church is, as Son of God, "the image of the invisible God, and the brightness of His glory." As Creator? "All things were created by Him, and for Him." As Upholder and preserver? "By Him all things consist." As Source and Fountain? "He *is the* beginning." "As *firstborn*?" "The firstborn from the dead." As *eminent*? "In all things He hath the *pre-eminence*." And as God-man in one person, He is "the Head of the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." This relationship of the head to the body is most near, most natural, indissoluble, and necessary for the life and well-being of *both*. Separation of the head from the members of the body, or the members of the body from the

head, involves the death of both head and members. See this great truth of the Church's union to Christ, illustrated and enforced in 1 Cor. xii. 12–14 and 27. See it further illustrated by His conjugal relation (Eph. v. 25 and 32), and compare Rom. vii. 1–4; and yet again by the relation between the persons in the Godhead (John xvii. 20, 21). See also 1 Cor. xi. 3.

"Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, the Son of God took part of the same." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." In His own proper body, the body prepared for Him, He lived, believed, obeyed, and died. "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree;" but in virtue of His redemption, substitution, and salvation, He did in His resurrection, rehabilitate Himself with a *mystical* body, raising us up together and making us sit together with Himself in heavenly places, where He is enthroned above all principalities and powers. Remember the beautiful type of all this (Lev. xxiii .15-17), and compare, "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. . . . Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." Meantime, He is the enthroned Head of His Church, and all believers are His members—an

union involving and securing the common interest, identity, dignity, destiny, and sympathy of members with Head, and Head with members. Imagine for a moment a spiritual vision: a Body whose feet stood on the earth, while its head was above the heavens, and on that head were many crowns; and all creation in all its departments under its absolute control. So also is Christ, and we in Christ. Our Head is in heaven, and on the throne; all honour, power, happiness, security, and grace, and glory are His and for all eternity. "All fulness dwells in Him." "All power is committed to Him" (Matt. xxviii. 18). "All things" (John iii. 35). "All judgment" (John v. 35). All offices: He is the Prophet, the Priest, and the King! All His people are headed up in Him, who is their "all and in all." God gave Him to be Head of His Church, and Head over all things to His Church, "and the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of thee." Do we ask when was this great gift bestowed? (1) In the purpose of God before all worlds (Eph. i. 2). (2) In union at His Incarnation (Isa. ix.; Heb. ii.). In manifestation at His resurrection (Acts xiii.). In celebration at His ascension, and when the Holy Ghost came down to seal us unto the day of redemption. And finally in consummation, when He shall come to be

glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe ; as it is written, "Behold me, and the children Thou hast given me."

Beloved reader, is the risen and ascended Son of God—God-Man—our Head ? Let us then worship the King ! Let us be glad in the Lord. Let us trust and not be afraid. Let us commit all things into His hands. Let us rest in His love. Let us grow up into Him in all things. Let us receive of His fulness, and live the life we live in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and who now and evermore lives in us by His Spirit, which He hath given us.

THE BODY OF CHRIST.

"The Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."—*Eph.* i. 22, 23.

WE now proceed to consider that which is here revealed to us concerning the relation which the Church bears to the Son of God. (1) As He is the Head, the Church is *His Body*. (2) As He filleth all in all, the Church is *His fulness*. The Son of God, our Creator, in His boundless love for and delight in the sons of men has assumed a human body personal to Himself. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." In consequence He is God and man in one person, God-man over all, blessed for ever. He died from sin, and rose again for our justification; and this manifestation of inconceivable and inexpressible love is the *great mystery of godliness*. "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. iii. 16). The Son of God,

God-man now and for evermore, has also assumed a *mystical* body, consisting of a people given unto Him by His Father. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me." They are the children, He is the firstborn; they are His members, He is their Head. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body" (Eph. v. 29). All that believe on His name are united to Him and to each other, even as the Father and He are one (John xvii. 20, 21). And this is *the great mystery of grace.*

Let us be quite clear on this subject, according to the revealed mind, will, and purpose of God, who seeth all events as present; and to whom all things, past, present, and to come, are known. An elect people were chosen in Christ, and given to Him of His Father to be blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings, before the world was (Eph. i. 3). As it is written again: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:" "and we are" (R.V.) ". . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear (or be manifested), we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 1, 2). Once in the end

of the world He was manifested to take away our sins, and the second time He shall be manifested to make us like unto Himself. This being His Father's purpose and will, Christ has ever seen and regarded His believing people in the light thereof. In this view of them He has received them, united Himself to them, made Himself responsible for their sins, died to expiate them, and rose again for their justification, ever living at God's right hand to make intercession for all who come to God by Him, while He is *in Himself* the new and living way by which they come. Even as Eve was created in Adam before she was manifested and presented to him, so God's people were chosen in Christ and given to be His mystical body before the world was. Our subsequent sin and ruin did not and could not deprive us of His love and interest in us. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death." The Just One gave Himself for the unjust, to bring us back unto God; and God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that He might live again through Him. But the incarnation of the Head of His Church, and our redemption through His blood; the gift of Pentecost; our union to Christ by faith;

the quickening of His members; their justification from all things; their preservation in the world; their daily cleansing and final gathering together into one in Christ, to be presented unto God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, are only *the results* of God our Father's "own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world was."

Faith apprehends these wonderful facts, but it does not create them; but in apprehending them and receiving them on the testimony of the Holy Ghost, faith purifies the heart, changes the life, and consecrates the new-born believer. The analogy between the members of the natural body and the spiritual, and the mutual interest the members of each have in the head and the head in the members, as implied in our text, is very fully set forth in other parts of God's Word. See, for instance, 1 Cor. xii. 12: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: *so also is Christ* . . and whether *one* member suffer, *all* the members suffer with it; or if *one* member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now *ye* are the body of Christ, and members *in particular*." This seems plain enough. As the union of the head with his members, and of the members with each

other in the natural body constitutes *a living man*, so the union of His believing people with Christ, their spiritual Head, and with each other in Him, constitutes the *mystical Christ!* And when the head and his members in all their varying beauties and symmetry, completeness and perfections (no part lacking), shall be presented to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish, thereby shall "all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:" and "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. iii. 9–11).

In the light of these scriptures let us study more particularly the illustration so familiar to us all. The human body is one whole, made up of a variety of parts, living the same life; however they may differ as to their position or usefulness or capability of employment in the body, each part having its own place and use in the body, and forming part of the body, being essential to its completeness, and occupying the position and use assigned to it by the Creator with a view to the comfort, beauty, usefulness, symmetry, and well-being of the whole,—

the more delicate members needing the most protection ; the less honourable receiving the greatest care, and the rudest and roughest parts being the most serviceable. "So that the head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of you." Read 1 Cor. xii. 14–27. Thus we see in the natural body however the muscles and organs may differ one from the other, and whatever may be their variety in gifts, uses, offices, and operations in the body, *yet are they altogether but one body !* all vitally and inseparably united to the same Head : all mutually dependent on each other, and ministering to each other, uniformity being neither possible nor desirable ; while their union and identification with each other are complete, and cannot be interfered with without injury to the whole body, or even disease or death. Physically, "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; " and morally, one life, one death, one judgment, is common to all. " So also is the Christ " (*i.e.* the spiritual Head and His members). The Son of God took our nature, united us to Himself, and "gave Himself for us," "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." "Once in the end of the world hath He been manifested to put away sin, to the sacrifice of Himself ; " in that He died, He died unto sin once (for all) ; in that He liveth, He liveth unto God (for us) : "likewise

reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto Him, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord;" for if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye (believers) are the body of Christ, and members in particular (*v.* 27). "I (whatever may be my position in His body) have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). "So also is the Christ." "The Church!" His mystical body! The company of His believing people in heaven and earth. They are "the Church of the first-born" and the purchase of His blood, they "have become dead to the law by the dead body of Christ; that they might be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that they might bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. vii. 4). Verily, "one member being honoured, all the members rejoice with him; the Christ is raised from the dead, and dieth no more." "He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and he that liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." "There be gods many, and lords many; but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus

Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Cor. viii. 6). Note the words: "The Church which is His body,"—not merely a body or the body, but "*His body*"; sweet word! and truly herein lies its beauty, dignity, excellency, and glory! "His body" by a double right. (1) As He is the firstborn of all God's ways and purposes, and given to Him. (2) As the firstborn from the dead, begotten anew by Him, redeemed, justified, and sanctified: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me" (John xvii. 6), "and for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they may be truly sanctified" (*v.* 19). In rising again from the dead, our Lord Jesus Christ has rehabilitated Himself, as Aaron did, after he had made atonement for the people. "He put off the linen garments, which he had put on;" and "He put on his garments" (Lev. xvi. 23, 24). These were his priestly garments for beauty and glory, and his doing so on this occasion seems to shadow forth our great High Priest, investing Himself with His body, which is the Church, in virtue of His having given Himself as a sacrifice for their sins, and having risen again for their justification. The body of Christ, which is His Church, is no dull lump, no loose cohesion of hostile particles, no fortuitous collection of believers; but a body! chosen! formed! arranged! proportioned! adapted! united!

and inhabited! a holy temple, filled, furnished, and prepared, to be "an habitation for God through the Spirit,"—and "as a bride adorned for her husband." It is "a new *creation*," this body of Christ! and its connection with its risen, ascended, and enthroned head in heaven is a connection of—*life*, for "He is our life;" *mind*, for "we have the mind of Christ;" *power*—the members have no self-motion; *parentage*—"He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one;" *sympathy*—He is "touched with a feeling of our infirmities;" *dignity*—as He is, so are we in this present world; *destiny*—"where I am, there shall ye be also." And meantime, we have our portion, food, raiment, foes, friends, joys, sorrows, trials, and victories, in common with Him who is our head, in whom all fulness dwelleth; and "from whom His whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. iv. 16). If we inquire, how is this union with Christ effected? this mystical body formed? the answer is, by the Holy Ghost, through faith of the operation of God, and the Word of God. Faith receives our Lord Jesus Christ, who "is all and in all;" and the gift of God *as* "all and in all,"

thus uniting the believer to Him, who took our nature, and lived, and died, and rose again for us. See John xvii. 20, 21. Thus united, we are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter i. 3), and "are complete in Him who is the head of all principalities and powers" (Col. ii. 10). See also 1 Cor. xii. 13 and Eph. iv. 11–13.

"All we (that is all who believe) are begotten into Christ, who is at the right hand of God, in believing on His name;" and thus become "branches of the vine," "members of His body," headed up in Him, unto whom "all authority in heaven and earth is given." As by *natural generation* we are members of the first Adam, so by *spiritual regeneration* we become members of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, and begin even here to grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, "for the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God." There is not a shade of difference in this respect. Christ is the head of *His body, the Church*, and the head over all things to His Church. All the members are united in Him, and to each other in Him "and of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." We are not presented here with the picture of any ecclesiastical system, or order, or any visible congregation, or detail of church ordinances;

but with *a spiritual body*, composed of spiritual members, all vitally united to one living head, and all this effected by the sovereign power and grace of God the Holy Ghost, producing and uniting the members to Christ, and to each other, in harmony, fellowship, sympathy, and love; all quickened by the same eternal life that was "with the Father before the world was;" all fellow-heirs together and of the same body, partakers together of the same salvation, in fellowship and communion with God; all equally "washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11); all equally secure, redeemed, and adopted; all equally partakers of the Divine nature, and kept by the same power, truth, and faithfulness, in the bonds of "the everlasting covenant;" yet in themselves all equally weak and dependent, and unworthy,—nevertheless, "filled full in Him;" and all made to drink into the same Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 13). Reader, doth He not seem to say to you, "Drink, yea drink abundantly, My beloved"? Let there be no lack. Come without money and without price. Participate in My fulness, be nourished in My grace, have the enjoyment of My love, and the fellowship of My Spirit. "Thirst, come, drink, flow" (John vii. 37). Oh, for enlightened eyes,

and to be "renewed in knowledge." Alas, for the great difference in *this* respect! Lord, *increase* our faith! enlarge our knowledge! brighten our hope! deepen our love! for while some are "babes," others "young men," and some are "fathers," yet are we *all* Thy children, and "forgiven for His Name's sake."

HIS FULNESS.

"The fulness of Him that filleth all in all."—*Eph.* i. 23.

WE have already seen that God has given to His best beloved and only begotten Son to be the Head of the Church, which is His body; now of that body the Holy Ghost further informs us that it is "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Let us approach the study of this wondrous revelation by degrees.

1st. Christ as the Son of God incarnate, in whom all fulness dwelleth, has His own body, prepared, personal, and special peculiar to Himself; as it is written, "a body hast *thou* prepared Me." Herein is "the great mystery of godliness—God was manifested in the flesh." The Word, "which was in the beginning with God and was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." This God-man, born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, who lived, obeyed, suffered for our sins and rose again for our justification, is now seated at the right hand of God, all power and

authority in heaven and earth having been committed unto Him; for "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Thus He who is the Head *of* His Church is also Head over all things *to* His Church. All our enemies are beneath His feet, and Christ our Head liveth evermore unto God in the power of an endless life, angels, principalities, and powers being made subject unto Him!

2nd. Christ the Son of God as *God-man* has also a mystical body, of which He is the spiritual head, and which, in union with Himself, is called *the Christ.* "For as the (human) body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is the Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12). For even as the union of head and members in a natural body make one man, so the union of believing men and women with the risen God-man make one Christ. It is an union of nature, name, parentage, interests, and destiny. "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the

world may know Thou hast loved them, even as Thou hast loved Me." Separation between the head and members involves death, but our head, the Lord Jesus Christ, dieth no more, and those who believe on Him shall never die. He died unto sin once, and for all the body; "for if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Cor. xii. 26, 27). Of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of His body, the Church, it is further written, that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily;*" and accordingly of His members it is also written, "Ye are complete in Him"; and yet again, "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." Accordingly of His members it is written, "and of His fulness have *all* we received, and grace for grace." Thus we learn that as our Lord Jesus Christ is the head of His Church, and the Head over all things to His Church, His people are the members of His mystical body; and as in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and as He filleth all in all, His people are "His *fulness*"—not of course in the sense of their being the cause, or source, or fountain of His fulness, but in respect of their being the sphere of its communications, the

depositories and treasure store for all its manifestations and display, "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them *that believe*" (2 Thess. i. 10). Just as the fulness of the *sun* is not retained for itself, but is diffused in seasons, and seen, in sunshine, scattering life and light, fruitfulness, fragrance, health and beauty whensoever and wheresoever it sends forth its beams, and as the fulness of the ocean is seen in the rivers and the fountains, the dewdrops, and the rain which gladden and refresh the earth; or as the fulness of the vine is seen in the richness and variety of its clusters; so the fulness of Him that "filleth all in all" shall be manifested in the eternal beauty, blessedness, happiness, holiness, fulness, peacefulness, and glory of His people, when "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." The careful student of this chapter to the Ephesian Church will observe and be careful to remember the three synonymous expressions, setting forth the exceeding greatness of His power *to us-ward who believe.* We are "His Church," "His body," "His fulness," even the fulness of Him that "filleth all in all." Oh for light and spiritual power to grasp this surpassing revelation!

Observe, there is an *all* to be filled, and an *all* and in all wherewith to be filled. Poor trembling believer

in Jesus Christ, thou art a portion of the fulness of Him "in whom all fulness dwelleth," a member of Him "that filleth all in all," and the Lord hath *need of thee.* There is a special adaptation in His fulness for *thy special need,* for all His fulness must be displayed and communicated to His members. There is fulness for the least as well as the greatest, for the meanest as well as for the principal members of His mystical body. "The head cannot say to the foot, I have no need of *you.*"

An infinite variety of needs in the members is essentially necessary in order to manifest the boundless supply in the fulness of the Head, that He may be glorified, even as the branches of the vine are necessary as its only channels for the display of its wealth of fruitfulness. It shall one day be fully manifested to heaven and earth, to angels and to men, that Christ's people stand in Him alone, and that they have no resources or supplies whatever but in His fulness. "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord." The Sin-Bearer alone can keep His people from falling. Sin is stronger than angels, for even angels kept not their first estate, but fell. Sin is stronger than perfect creatures made in the image of God; for Adam was so, yet he fell. Sin is stronger than electing, pardoning, and abounding grace, else David had not sinned,

nor had St. Peter denied his Lord. And "if we," to whom all grace has abounded, "say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Only Christ is stronger than "the strong man," and His believing people, the members of His mystical body, stand and have their security and supply in Him alone. His "all fulness" needs all the wants, emptiness, conflicts, necessities, weakness, corruptions and temptations of His people for the sphere of its communications. No one member of the body, or limited number of members, are sufficient to contain the graces to be imparted.

We must comprehend *with all saints* the fulness laid up for us in Christ, as well as the breadth and length, and depth and height of His love, which passeth knowledge," and which has provided pardon for every sin, and justification, acceptance, and welcome for every sinful child of Adam, save only the definite and final rejectors of Himself. "For all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," and for His sake. Come then, bring empty vessels not a few, here are gifts laid up for all sorts, and no denial for any kind of sinner, in order that His fulness may be seen, and that each believer may be in his own case a living monument to show forth the perfections and praises of

Him in whom all fulness dwelleth. *One* shall receive and display His fulness of strength who is evermore "a strength to the needy in his distress." *Another* shall be an example of His patience; *another*, of His care; *another*, of His long-suffering; *another*, of His tenderness; *another*, of His power; *another*, of His guiding mercy and gentleness; and *all* of His changeless love. There are gifts and graces inexhaustible, and boundless operations and treasures of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge for the filling, and all sorts of needy ones to be filled —*all* of them, all the *parts* of them, body, soul, and spirit; all the powers, faculties, and immortality of all of them, for He "filleth all in all," that He may be glorified. He doth it—

1st. *Meritoriously*, for His people's salvation is the fruit of "the travail of His soul."

If we are rich, it is because He became poor.

If we live, it is because He died and rose again for us.

If we are sons, it is because He became a servant.

If we are heirs, it is because He was made a curse for us.

If we are filled, it is because He was emptied; And He doth it—

2. *Efficiently.* He "filleth all in all." His Godhead is the source; His human nature is the

channel; His Holy Spirit is the agent; and His own fulness is the measure of our supply; for "of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Verily the consolations of God are contained in these facts. Consider a few of the consequences resulting from them:—

1. If Christ's believing people are His body and His fulness, then none of them shall be wanting when He shall come to be admired in His saints. If otherwise?—*no fulness.*

2. If Christ's believing people are His body and His fulness, then not one of them shall be lacking in any matters essential for their perfection. If otherwise?—*no fulness.*

3. If Christ's believing people are His body and His fulness, then no member shall be out of place, and no desire unsatisfied. If otherwise?—*no fulness.*

4. If Christ's people are His body and His fulness, then no grace, or *continuance of grace*, laid up for us in Him, shall be unsupplied. If otherwise?—*no fulness.*

5. If Christ's people are His body and His fulness, then shall there be no want of salvation, security, growth, attainment, station, proportion, or symmetry in any of them. If otherwise?—*no fulness.*

6. If we are His body and His fulness, *all* of us are absolutely necessary for the completeness of our glorious Christ Himself, and even the very hairs of our head must all be numbered. If otherwise?—*no fulness.*

7. If we are *His* body, then must His members be presented faultless, holy, unblamable, and unreprovable, and without spot or wrinkle. If otherwise?—*no fulness.*

Finally, if any member be absent or incomplete, misplaced, undeveloped, or deficient, either overgrown, or undergrown, or wanting in proportion, then would there be *no fulness.* Nay, from the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, every communicable attribute laid up in Christ shall bestow its blessedness on us in due time and in due proportion. According to the dispensations of His grace, and effectual working in the measure of every part, and all the varieties of our needs and circumstances here below shall but serve for manifestations of *the fulness* of Him who is to His believing people their all and in all.

Come, beloved reader, let us walk in the light of the Lord; let us leave the cold shade of distrust, distance, doubt, and unbelief. If, indeed, we have received Jesus Christ, our new-born spirits have already been operated on by the exceeding greatness

of the Almighty power by which God raised Him from the dead to be the Head of His Church, and "the Head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." "We have been planted together in the likeness of His death, and we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. vi. 5). "They that have been planted in the house of our Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God." The trees of the Lord are full of sap; The river of God is full of water; The city of God is full of light; The temple of God is full of glory, "*which temple ye are*" (1 Cor. iii. 17 and 2 Cor. vi. 16).

The royal banquet is spread, and all things are ready. "Eat, friends, drink ye, yea, drink abundantly O beloved." I bid you to the feast. Come and welcome to Jesus Christ, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, ye shall be changed into the same image. Arise, O believer, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!

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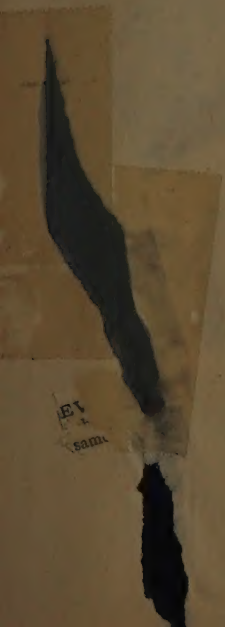

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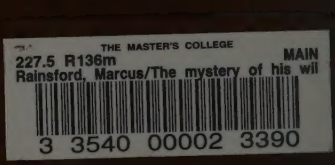
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